A Better Life

by

SAMUEL MILLER

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A BETTER LIFE

How to Live It According to the Epistle to the Hebrews

by

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PREFACE

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents a wonderful exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ which is especially applicable to our own day and age. Here is God's own remedy for skepticism and unbelief and for every weakness and sin which might beset the Christian.

In this Letter the Holy Spirit continually brings the backslider and sinner into the presence of a holy God to show him the awful consequences of continuing in the way of sin. **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Our God is a consuming fire."**

But the remedy lies not in ourselves but in Christ Jesus. What a marvelous picture of Christ we have in this Letter! In His person He is so plainly set forth as the Son of God who became flesh. As the God-Man He accomplished by His death that cleansing from sin of which all the Old Testament sacrifices had been only a type and shadow.

Now since Christ has died there is a new and living way by which we may come into a saving fellowship with the holy God Himself. But Christ not only died for sin. Having been brought again from the dead, He has ascended and is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Epistle to the Hebrews particularly emphasizes the reality of our ascended Lord who is our Brother; having experienced all our temptations, having died for us, having conquered death, He now lives forevermore to make intercession for us, an intercession which is prompted by His great sympathetic love for those who, suffering temptation, look to Him for succor and help. Being seated on the right hand of God and possessing all the powers of His Deity, He is "able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him."

Do we not need such a Saviour? And is not this a message for a generation which, having trusted in the knowledge and philosophies and plans of man, is realizing its desperate helplessness?

Then too, this Letter shows us the reality of the unseen world. What a message for an age of materialism! Here we see that the great heroes of faith were great in their lives because to them the unseen realm was real and they were on their way to a more glorious fellowship with God in that unseen realm. By faith in the ascended Christ Jesus this can be even still more real to us. Such a realization would be the solution to many an apparently impossible situation in which we find ourselves in this material universe of time and space.

It is my hope and prayer that this little devotional commentary will be used by God to show some seeking souls the secret of how to live a better life of faith, hope and love.

SAMUEL MILLER.

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I

INTRODUCTION

If you study Hebrews carefully and prayerfully you will discover the secret of how to live the Christian life. As you appropriate these truths of God you will experience in your life the power of Him who "**is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.**" Ch. 7. 25.

You will see your sins. "**For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest and laid open in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.**" Ch. 4. 12, 13.

But you will also see your Saviour, the Great High Priest, who "once for all" shed His blood to atone for your sin and who now is alive to intercede and to work on your behalf.

You need what God wants to give you through Hebrews. The church of Christ needs today in a special way the dynamic of this portion of the Word of God. If we would yield ourselves to it we would see marvelous results.

Is not this a challenge worth heeding?

Get your Bible and a notebook. I am not going to do your studying for you, but by the grace and help of God I am going to awaken your interest and direct your attention.

If you will let my comments spur you on and if you will do what I tell you to do, you are going to experience results.

Do not forget to pray. "Draw near to the throne of grace." Pray every time you study. Pray definitely for help. Pray for results in your own life. Pray for fellow Christians.

1. The Purpose of the Letter

We shall immediately plunge into the atmosphere of this letter by looking for the purpose. We shall understand it better if we realize what the author is seeking to accomplish.

"Let Us Draw Near"

This exhortation is found many times. Note it in Ch. 4. 16.

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

The purpose is to show the readers that we may have the privilege of a personal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. He is a living, sympathetic High Priest. He has done everything required for our salvation. He is now able to continue His work in us. He has opened a new and living way. In Him we come into the presence of the Living God. Though we be sinful we will for His sake receive mercy. God has accepted His sin-offering. Now God accepts us for His sake.

Now **read the whole book** rapidly and note how the readers are continually urged to consider Christ and to draw near to Him.

Have a page for this in your notebook and record the most striking incidents according to the above suggestion.

"Let Us Press On"

In Ch. 4. 16 we read "that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

After we have received mercy at the throne and been accepted for Christ's sake we are to go out into life. The results of our fellowship with God will then be apparent by the way we live. As each time of need arises we shall experience His grace to meet the need and victoriously overcome.

In the measure that we have sought Him in the Word and in prayer, in that measure will His power be manifest in our lives.

We will not be satisfied to remain spiritual babes, but there will be an urge in us to press on in growth and development. See Ch. 5. 11—6. 1.

Now go through the book again and note this element of its purpose. **First into the holy of holies** for fellowship with God in Christ, **then out into life's experiences** to exercise the powers received. We are to "hold fast our confession," have "fulness of faith," "run with patience the race," "endure chastening," "follow after peace," "love," "remember," bear reproach," "offer sacrifices," "obey," "pray."

Key Words and Phrases

A study of some of the key words and phrases will give you a still better appreciation of the purpose of this letter. You will find that you can group them under two heads: comparisons and exhortations.

Comparisons

These could all be summed up in the word "**better.**" **Make a list of every passage in which the word "better" occurs** and it will be very evident to you that the author is comparing what we have in Christ with what God had provided in the Old Covenant in order to show us how great our blessings are in Christ.

Along with the word "better" you will also note such words as "more," "higher," "greater," "new," "heavenly," "eternal."

See how many such comparisons you can list.

Two more similar ideas are to be noted:

"Perfection." This does not mean sinlessness but "refers to a mature Christian experience, in contrast with a rudimentary one" (Thomas). Christ has made it possible for us to experience this perfection or maturity even in this life. This was impossible under the law.

"Partakers." Christianity is not only true doctrine, but reality of experience. The old covenant presented forms, symbolisms, promises. Christ gives grace and power to experience living realities.

How the Church needs this message about "partakers." Leaders are so easily satisfied with forms and people think definitions constitute religion.

But young seekers are not satisfied. They want realities in experience. Christ offers it to them in Hebrews.

Exhortations

The second grouping of key words is under exhortations and warnings. Usually you will find them introduced by "let us" and "lest." **Make a list of all such expressions.** They will challenge you tremendously. You will want to cry to Jesus Christ for help.

2. The Plan of the Letter

The purpose of the letter as indicated above is worked out in a beautiful plan. The simplest key to the plan is the word "better." Since in the first place the letter is written to Jewish Christians, the author shows that in Christ believers have that which is better than anything found in the old covenant. **Read the chapters as indicated.**

A. A Better Messenger. Chs. 1 and 2

God had spoken to the fathers, through His messengers the prophets, but in speaking to us in His Son He has used a messenger who is

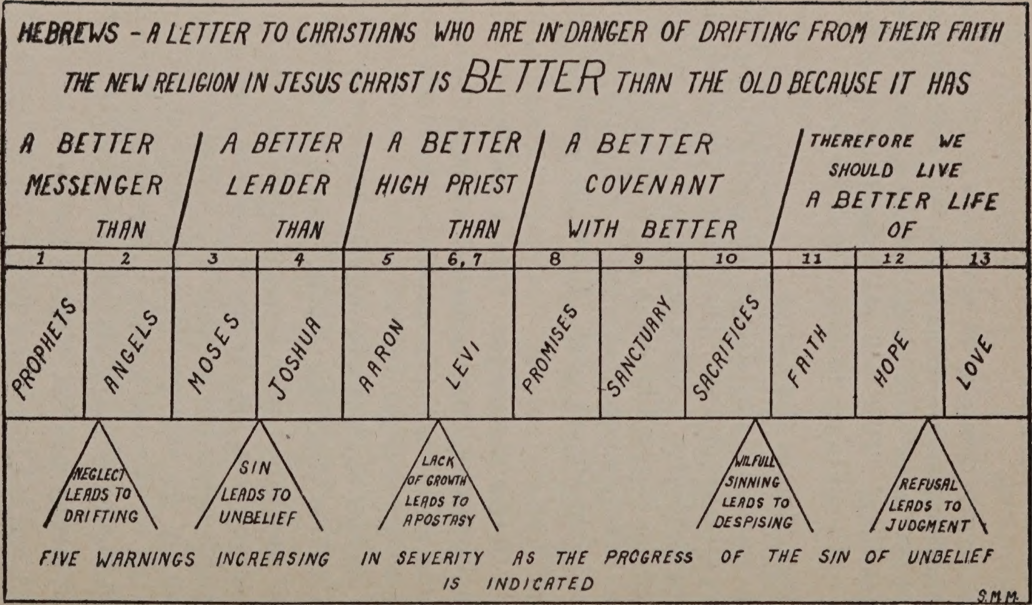
a) Better than the prophets. Ch. 1. 1–3.

b) Better than the angels. Ch. 1. 4—2. 18.

The angels had often brought messages from God in the old covenant, but the Son of God was King also over the angels before His incarnation! And after He became a man He not only was Himself exalted above the angels, but by His death made it possible for mankind to attain to a position of rulership even over the angels.

B. A Better Leader. Chs. 3 and 4

God had led the Jewish people out of Egypt by the hand of Moses and by his work molded them into a nation.



HEBREWS - A LETTER TO CHRISTIANS WHO ARE IN DANGER OF DRIFTING FROM THEIR FAITH

THE NEW RELIGION IN JESUS CHRIST IS **BETTER** THAN THE OLD BECAUSE IT HAS

A BETTER MESSENGER THAN		A BETTER LEADER THAN		A BETTER HIGH PRIEST THAN		A BETTER COVENANT WITH BETTER			THEREFORE WE SHOULD LIVE A BETTER LIFE OF		
1	2	3	4	5	6, 7	8	9	10	11	12	13
PROPHETS	ANGELS	MOSES	JOSHUA	AARON	LEVI	PROMISES	SANCTUARY	SACRIFICES	FAITH	HOPE	LOVE

NEGLECT LEADS TO DRIFTING

SIN LEADS TO UNBELIEF

LACK OF GROWTH LEADS TO APOSTASY

WILFULL SINNING LEADS TO DESPISING

REFUSAL LEADS TO JUDGMENT

FIVE WARNINGS INCREASING IN SEVERITY AS THE PROGRESS OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF IS INDICATED

S.M.M.

By Joshua He had led them into the promised land of Canaan.

But in Christ we have a Leader who is

a) Better than Moses. Ch. 3.

b) Better than Joshua. Ch. 4.

Better than Moses, because as the faithful Son He has power to make us living members of the household of God.

Better than Joshua, because He is able to lead us into "the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

C. A Better High Priest. Chs. 5–7.

In an argument with Jewish Christians to prove the superiority of Christianity, the author would inevitably be led to the subject of the high priest. God had used Moses to lead them out of Egypt. By the hand of Joshua He had led them into Canaan. But by the Aaronic priesthood He had provided a way of approach to Himself. The author has already indicated how he would meet this thought. Note Ch. 2. 17 and Ch. 3. 1 and Ch. 4. 14.

That he considers this the climax of his argument is indicated in Ch. 8. 1: "The chief point is this: We have such a high priest." Everything that follows is a part or a result of His priesthood.

As a high priest, Jesus Christ is

a) Better than Aaron. Ch. 5.

He belongs to a

b) Better order than the Levitical. Ch. 7.

Like Aaron He possessed all the prerogatives of a true high priest, but God had given His Son an eternal and saving priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. He is better than Aaron in His humiliation even unto death. He is of the order of Melchizedek in His exaltation by resurrection from the dead.

D. A Better Covenant. Chs. 8–10.

It was by the Mosaic covenant of the law that God had appointed the ministry of the Levitical priesthood. Jesus Christ, the eternal, living High Priest is the Mediator of a better covenant, with

a) Better Promises. Ch. 8.
b) Better Sanctuary. Ch. 9.
c) Better Sacrifices. Ch. 10.

Even during the existence of the old covenant a new one was promised. When Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle he was told to make it a copy of the heavenly one. The law made it very plain that its sacrifices could never cleanse the conscience from sin. All these pointed forward to a complete fulfillment in Christ.

Now since we may have fellowship with God by this new and living way, we ought to live

E. A Better Life. Chs. 11–13.

Here we can note one of the regular methods of this writer. He casually introduces his subjects before he takes them up in detail as we observed in the matter of the high priest. Now he mentions faith, hope and love in Ch. 10. 22, 23, 24.

The life in Christ should be a better life of

a) Faith. Ch. 11.
b) Hope. Ch. 12.
c) Love. Ch. 13.

Note how this is brought out in the first verse of each chapter.

The progress of the plan is not always so easy to see because in the midst of the various steps of his argument the author stops for application in the form of exhortations and warnings. These we have indicated on the accompanying diagram by wedges.

But even in these practical sections there is a very evident progress of thought.

The Five Warnings

1) Neglect of the Word leads to drifting into sin. Ch. 2. 1–4.

2) Sin leads to unbelief, a great hindrance to spiritual growth. Ch. 3. 7–19.

3) Spiritual backwardness leads to apostasy. Ch. 5. 11—6. 20.

4) Wilful sinning leads to treading Christ under foot. Ch. 10. 26–39.

5) Refusal to hear leads to judgment. Ch. 12. 25–29.

Study the diagram. It will help you to visualize the plan of the book.

3. Authorship

We have several times mentioned the author of this letter. Who wrote it? Nobody knows. The King James version of the English Bible credits it to Paul. That is an old theory, but only a theory. The letter does not name the author.

It is Pauline in character, and some think there is internal evidence for his authorship.

Others think Luke wrote it according to Paul's teaching. There are expressions in it found only in Luke's Gospel and Acts.

Another theory holds that Appollos wrote it, for like him the author is mighty in the Scriptures and able to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ. See Acts 18.

Still another theory says Barnabas is the author. As a Levite he would have a deep appreciation of how Christ is the fulfillment of all the Levitical forms and ceremonies.

The letter itself omits the name of the human instrument, thereby emphasizing the Divine authorship.

"God hath spoken." Ch. 1. 1.

All the Old Testament quotations are said to be the word of the Holy Spirit. Where a human author is mentioned, as in the case of David, it is said that the Holy Spirit spoke through him.

Go through the book and **gather all the references to God** as speaking by the Holy Spirit.

4. The Recipients of the Letter

From the contents of the letter we can infer a number of interesting and instructive things about those to whom it is addressed.

1) They must have been Hebrew Christians. **Gather some evidences** to prove this.

2) They may have been living at Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple. **Why?**

3) They were tempted to give up their faith in Christ and return to Judaism.

They might have heard arguments such as the following:

You are traitors to Moses and the religion God gave us through him.

How foolish to leave the splendor of our Jewish rituals for your insignificant Christian prayer-meetings and services.

Do any of the big men believe in Jesus as the Christ?

Who are your leaders? Ignorant fishermen and despised publicans.

Who is this Jesus? Was He not executed as a common criminal when our leaders found Him guilty of blasphemy? And you worship Him as your God! Him who died such a shameful death!

Did He rise from the dead? Yes, there was a rumor to that effect, but our leaders soon spiked that.

And did He not say that He would come again some day? Several years have passed now and He has not come yet! How foolish to continue to wait for Him!

If you will not listen to reason, watch out. You may have to suffer for your folly. You will find that it does not advance you in business or society to be a narrow-minded follower of Jesus.

How modern these arguments sound. **See if you can find answers to them in the letter.**

The letter's great message to those who are tempted seems to be this:

If you will but study the facts about Jesus Christ you will want to know Him better.

As you grow in the knowledge of Christ you will want to have more intimate and personal fellowship with Him.

As you fellowship with Jesus Christ in the Word and in prayer you will be the recipient of His boundless grace.

When you go out into the temptations of life you will find that the living Christ is able to succor them that are tempted and that He gives power for the exercise of every Christian virtue.

What a glorious revelation!

II

A BETTER MESSENGER

Having gone through the Epistle to the Hebrews for a general view of its purpose and plan, we are now ready to study the various sections in detail. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will take of the things of Jesus and give them unto us.

This letter gives us a glorious picture of the Christ who is "**able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.**" Let us always remember that, as we study, God's intention and purpose is that the Word shall be a means by which His grace and power is transmitted to us. He is seeking to accomplish in us the very things of which He speaks. Our study should be a drawing near that we may "receive mercy and may find grace to help us in time of need."

First, let me give you a suggestion for study of chapters one and two. I would suggest that you pursue this study before reading the comments which are to follow. After you have yourself studied the chapters you will appreciate much more the comments given.

Suggestions for Study—Chs. 1 and 2

1. Make a list of every particular in which the Son of God is greater than the prophets.

2. Make a list of all the particulars in which He is greater than the angels.

3. To what exhortation does this study of the Son lead? Ch. 2. 1.

4. List the details of the argument supporting the exhortation. Ch. 2. 1–4.

5. Note that in Ch. 1 the comparison of the Son with the angels refers to His pre-existence and His deity. Note that in Ch. 2 the comparison with the angels continues, but now He is set forth in His incarnation as the representative man.

6. How low was Jesus brought when He was made a little lower than the angels?

7. How can He still be greater than the angels, having been made a little lower than the angels?

A. A Better Messenger. Chs. 1 and 2

a) Better than the prophets. Ch. 1. 1–3

> 1. 1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, 2 hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; 3 who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

The first two verses introduce us immediately to the theme and the method of this letter. Here we can see the supremacy of the Son of God and the privilege of the readers in receiving God's message through the Son. There is a comparison between the "old time" and "the end of these days"; between the "fathers" and "us"; between the "prophets" and the "Son."

It was God who spoke in the prophets. We need to emphasize that in our day when men try in every way to escape the fact that God is actually speaking in the Old and the New Testament. Some say that the Bible is all true and when they say that they do not mean that it is the truth. They hold that the Old Testament, for example, is a true revelation of what men have thought of God. They say you can see a sort of evolutionary process going on and that the opinion men held about God as revealed in Genesis is far different from their opinion as revealed in the New Testament.

Here are some things to think about in answer to such a position. This letter begins with the word "God." Genesis also begins with "God." The Bible is the book of God all the way through. God is always taken for granted. In the Bible you do not find any organized arguments for the existence of God. When men philosophize about God they always argue about His existence. The arguments are so well known that we have them organized and grouped and can place every argument presented under the heading to which it belongs. The Bible, however, simply brings us face to face with God and tells us that God is speaking.

Here is one of the differences between the liberal and the evangelical viewpoint with regards to the Scriptures. The liberals hold that the Bible is a record of men's thoughts about God, while the evangelicals hold that God has actually spoken and that the Bible has been produced by the Holy Spirit using men as instruments for the production.

However, the Bible does recognize a development of the revelation. God spake to the fathers "by divers portions and in divers manners." In the Old Testament the revelation was fragmentary. It was given a part at a time as man was ready to receive it. The picture of the coming Saviour was built up piece by piece and color by color.

God also used divers manners. Sometimes He actually dictated the message. Sometimes He spoke in dreams and in visions. Sometimes He sent an angel. Sometimes He guided and directed men's thoughts. Sometimes He caused them to record historical events as any other historian would do. Sometimes He caused them to copy from other records. He was never limited to any one method.

"But at the end of these days He hath spoken unto us in His Son." This is His supreme revelation. "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And now the author sets forth what a great thing it is that we may receive the message of God through His Son. This we will appreciate to the extent that we appreciate who the Son is.

1. "Heir of all things." Looking down into the future the author tells us that finally the Lord Jesus Christ is the rightful heir of all things. Jesus made this same claim in speaking with the leaders of the Jews in His day and you may recall the parable in which the husbandman sends his own son to collect the fruit of the vineyard and the husbandmen say among themselves: "This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance." The Lord Jesus Christ has the rights of an heir. Think how many there are who refuse to yield to Him the life which is His own, but cast Him out and kill Him!

2. **"Through whom also he made the worlds."** Looking back into the beginnings we see the Son as the one through whom everything has been made and planned.

3. **"The effulgence of his glory."** He is so truly God that the glory of God has in Him found the way to shine out to men.

4. **"The very image of his substance."** The figure may be taken from the idea of a die and the image which it impresses. God is the die and His Son Jesus Christ is His exact image.

5. **"Upholding all things by the word of his power."** All creation has the continuation of its existence by the word of His power. Men now hold that back of all matter is a force producing the matter. This is considered a very late scientific discovery. The scientist not only supposes that force to be present in the universe but is actually able to work with that force. It is because we are able to break up matter into force that we have the modern phenomena of the radio. But whence this mighty force? The Bible has answered the question long ago by telling us that it is the word of His power proceeding continually from Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

6. **"Made purification of sins."** Unless this statement had been made we could only have feared the glorious person set forth. But now we feel invited to come into His presence. There is room for sinners. Note how clearly this phrase states His saving work. He did not only show forth sentimentally and emotionally the love of God, but He accomplished the purification of sins.

7. **"Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."** From the depths of sacrifice to the glory of rulership. The emphasis in this letter is always on the ascended Christ, who having finished the work of redemption is now in heaven to intercede on our behalf.

8. **"Better than angels."** Although He has worked for man in the purification of sins, He has inherited a more excellent name than the angels and His name stands for His person and position.

The Old Testament revelation was given through subordinates. The New Testament was given through Him who is supreme. He is Heir, Creator, Revealer, Sustainer, Redeemer, Ruler, Supreme. Certainly Hebrews has introduced us to a Jesus Christ who is none other than God Himself.

b) Better Than the Angels. Ch. 1. 4—2. 18.

1. In His pre-existence. Ch. 1. 4–14.

4 having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee?

and again,

I will be to him a Father,
And he shall be to me a Son?

6 And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7 And of the angels he saith,

Who maketh his angels winds,
And his ministers a flame of fire:

8 but of the Son he saith,
Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever;
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
10 And,
Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the works of thy hands:
11 They shall perish; but thou continuest:
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
12 And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up,
As a garment, and they shall be changed:
But thou art the same,
And thy years shall not fail.
13 But of which of the angels hath he said at any time,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?
14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?

In His pre-existence the Son is greater than the angels in five particulars:

1) **Sonship.** He is the only begotten Son. The Father has never so named an angel.

2) **Worship.** He is worshipped by the angels, whereas the angels are servants whom He makes into a wind or a flame of fire to accomplish His purposes.

3) **Kingship.** He is not a servant but a King with an eternal throne, with a sceptre of righteousness, with an anointing by God in fullness of joy above all others. Note how the Psalmist calls the coming Messiah God, "Thy throne, O God," while at the same time he uses the wonderful expression, "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee." It is only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity that such language can have any meaning.

4) **Creatorship.** The material creation brought into existence through the Son of God shall perish, but He,

the Creator, is always the same and His "years shall not fail." Here again the Word of God is ahead of the best findings of science. It is true that the material creation is "waxing old as doth a garment." The theory of evolution requires an advancement from inorganic to organic matter, a progress from simple forms to complex forms. The fact is, however, that in the material realm the complex forms are breaking down into the simpler forms. This is the explanation of the emanation of force from such a substance as radium. The fact is that radium is breaking up and disappearing and therefore, instead of having a universe which is continually building itself up, we have a universe which is continually breaking up and waxing old. This fact was stated by the Psalmist long before the discovery of radium, but he also states God's purpose, "As a garment they shall be changed." God shall bring out, through the power of the glorified Christ, new heavens and a new earth.

5) **Rulership.** He is seated on the right hand of God until His enemies shall be made the footstool of His feet. His authority and His glory shall be recognized by all creation. Such a statement has never been made about angels. On the other hand, they are "ministering spirits" and in one sense their position is even lower than that of man because they are sent forth to serve those men who shall inherit the salvation provided by the Son of God.

2. In His incarnation. Ch. 2. 5–18.

2. 5 For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. 6 But one hath somewhere testified, saying,
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?
7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;
Thou crownedst him with glory and honor,
And didst set him over the works of thy hands:
8 Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet.

For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. 9 But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man. 10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying,

I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.

13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me. 14 Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

Passing over for the present the warning in verses 1–4 of Ch. 2 in order that we might keep the thread of the argument, we go on with Ch. 2. 5. It is now the author's purpose to show that this wonderful person of whom the scriptures have spoken, appeared on earth in

Jesus. It is also his purpose to show that even in His incarnation and even though He be humiliated unto death, He yet is greater than the angels. There are two subdivisions in this section:

1) Not unto angels did he subject the world to come. Ch. 2. 5.

The quotation from the eighth Psalm (vv. 6–8) shows us God's destiny for man. Although in his position here on earth he has been made a little lower than the angels, God's purpose is to set him over all the works of His hands and put all things, even the angels, in subjection under his feet. But sin came in and spoiled this plan of God so that "now we see not yet all things subjected to him," but we do see how God's destiny for man has been fulfilled in one man "even Jesus." By becoming a man, He took His position with men "a little lower than the angels." He even chose to go with man into the suffering of death, but because of this very obedience unto death, He is "crowned with glory and honor." And because He won the crowning with glory and honor through the suffering of death, He won it not for Himself only, but for every man, and now God's destiny for man can be fulfilled in Him.

The readers of the Letter were tempted to think it a shameful thing that God permitted Jesus Christ to die on the cross, but now we read that it was becoming of God to let His Son go through the suffering since His purpose was to bring "many sons unto glory" and since, through the suffering, Jesus Christ became the Author, the Captain, of their salvation. We certainly should not be ashamed of Him even though He died the death of execution on the cross, since He is not ashamed to call us brethren and to receive us as children whom God has given Him.

He did appear in flesh and blood but He partook of the same in order that He might be the Deliverer of the children who are sharers in flesh and blood, and who, in the flesh and blood, are subject to bondage to the devil, who holds them under the fear of death. Because the Son of God, in flesh and blood, was willing to pass through that death, He has brought "to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Note what a real personage the devil is in the Bible. Note carefully and bow in humble thanksgiving as you note it, that it required the death of Jesus Christ the Son of God to deliver you from the power of the devil.

We have seen, then, that God's destiny for mankind is that he shall rule over all the works of God's hands and that, although man lost that great privilege through sin, it has been regained in the representative man, Jesus Christ. He is the **Author** of salvation, the one who is not ashamed to be a **Brother** of man and who went through death to become the **Deliverer** from death.

2) "Not to angels doth He give help." Ch. 2. 16.

In the second place He is in His incarnation greater than the angels in that He has given help, not to angels, but to the "seed of Abraham." In view of the fact that He can give us such help we ought to recognize His greatness over against the angels and not yield to any temptation to feel ashamed of Him.

"It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto his brethren" because He had such a gracious purpose in it.

To be a "merciful and faithful high priest." This is the first introduction of the high priest theme which is the chief point in the Epistle. The author does not now develop the idea but emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ was merciful and faithful as a High Priest, taking care of the things in which we were helpless in ourselves, namely, the things pertaining to God and making "propitiation for the sins of the people." Here again we have a statement of His vicarious atonement. Reason about it as we will, the word "propitiation for sins" must mean that God's holiness and righteousness received such satisfaction through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that a way was opened for sinners to come into His holy presence.

But it is not only in His death that Christ has thus helped us. **Now He is alive and is able to help them that are tempted.** He is able to render this help most sympathetically because He Himself has "suffered being tempted."

Alas! Our human nature is so weak that we often enjoy our temptations even when we are determined to resist them and not yield. How often we have found ourselves actually toying and playing with temptation, enjoying the thrill which we thus experience. Of course, we were not going to commit the sin but it was pleasant to be thrilled by the temptation.

Not so our Lord Jesus. He "suffered being tempted." In the measure that His Holy Spirit dwells in us, we too, suffer when we are tempted. When any tempted soul cries out to the Lord Jesus for help, then all the sympathy of the saving Christ goes out to help such a one.

Now note briefly **the warning and exhortation in Ch. 2. 1–4.**

> 2. 1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; 4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

In view of the fact that God has spoken to us through such a one as His Son, and in view of the fact that He has confirmed the word "by them that heard," by miracles and "by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will," we certainly "ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard." There is great danger in not heeding. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" Of course, the answer is that there is no escape if we continue to neglect. If you neglect the Word of God you will soon drift. If you already are drifting, the only way to be saved from eternal destruction is to immediately give heed to what God has revealed through our Lord Jesus Christ. Neglect. Drift. What a picture of countless people who have known the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Suggestions for Study—Chs. 3 and 4

1. Think of some particulars in which Moses was a type of Jesus.
2. In what particulars does Hebrews say that Jesus was greater than Moses?
3. Of what great danger is warning given?
4. Distinguish between promised rest, God's rest, Joshua's rest, and Sabbath rest.
5. What three things should help us to enter into rest?

III

A BETTER LEADER

In our study of chapters one and two we saw how the Son of God became a little lower than the angels in order that through suffering and death He might save mankind and bring men to the position in which he would rule over all the works of God's hands, even over the angels. When, therefore, God sent His Son as a messenger to men, it was not only to bring a message but to work out that which would make the message of salvation possible. He is therefore a much better messenger than the prophets who could only tell of something that was to come, and better than the angels who could never bring salvation to men.

But Jewish Christians would remember their great leaders. God had sent them Moses to bring them out of the bondage of Egypt. God had given them Joshua to lead them as a people into the promised land. Under Moses and Joshua He had established the religion in which they were privileged to approach the holy God. If they are now to follow the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is necessary that they be shown that He is a better leader than Moses or Joshua.

B. A Better Leader. Chs. 3 and 4

This theme is introduced by **an address and an admonition.** In Ch. 3. 1 the readers are called "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling." They are "holy brethren" because by faith they are brothers of Him who was "not ashamed to call them brethren." To be the brethren of Jesus Christ is to be "holy brethren." Here the word "holy" refers to position and relationship. When our sins are forgiven and we by grace are accepted by God for Christ's sake as His children, we are holy as Christ is holy in the sight of God. This holiness is complete and perfect.

Here on earth we still possess our sinful human nature and are far from perfect, but being holy brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ it is God's purpose that we shall grow in holiness here too. This we will be enabled to do in the measure that we know Christ and by faith accept what God has provided for us in Him.

In the address the readers are also called the "partakers of a heavenly calling." As the expression "holy brethren" reminded us of chapter two, so does also this expression, for it refers to our calling in Christ to be placed over all the works of God's hands.

In Christ we are "holy brethren" and we are "partakers of a heavenly calling" and as such we are admonished to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." To consider means to contemplate, to study, to keep on looking, to meditate. Such considering will cause us to know Jesus Christ and will be an entering into fellowship with Him by which He will cause His life to be lived in us.

Here Jesus is called "the Apostle" looking back to the first two chapters where He was spoken of as the great Messenger of God. "High Priest" looks forward to what he intends to make the high point of his demonstration, namely, that in Jesus Christ we have our living High Priest. Jesus is the "Apostle and High Priest," not only of our faith but of our confession, because a living faith must also confess Him.

a) Better than Moses. Ch. 3. 1–6.

> 3. 1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus; 2 who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. 3 For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house. 4 For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; 6 but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end.

First we are shown that Jesus was like Moses in three particulars.

1. He was faithful.
2. He was appointed by God.
3. He was in all of God's house.

This suggests to us the study of Moses as a type of Christ. Think about the following points of similarity.

1. The escape from death in infancy.
2. The years of silent training.
3. The willingness to leave the palace of the king in order to set his people free.
4. His meekness.
5. His faithfulness.
6. The mediator who stood between God's wrath and the people and was willing to bear it himself. Moses even

asked God to blot his name out of the book of life instead of the people.

7. The communion with God, speaking to Him face to face.

It will be of interest and value to also make a list of **contrasts between Jesus and Moses** which will bring out the superiority of Christ. We shall limit ourselves now to those brought out here in Hebrews.

1. He is counted worthy of more glory than Moses because **He is the builder** of the house, whereas Moses is only a part of the house. By the word "house" is here meant the "household of God." When Jesus is called the "builder of the house," His deity is pointed out because "He that built all things is God."

2. He hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses because Moses, although he was faithful in all God's house, was so as a servant. But **Christ as a Son** over God's house, the only begotten Son, was put in charge of all the household of God.

Then, too, Moses' faithfulness as a servant was "for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken." All his service looks forward to a fulfillment to come. But Christ has power to make us His household. He is the fulfillment of all the promises.

From this point of the argument the author enters very naturally into **the exhortation: "We are the household of God, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end."** That is, faith is to be a constant attitude, continued in moment by moment and expressing itself in boldness and the glorying of our hope.

It requires a holy boldness to believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ. It is a bold thing for one who admits that he is sinful and defiled to dare to enter into the presence of the holy God. It also requires boldness to make confession of Christ in the world. But the world is bold. It does not hesitate to express itself. Why should not the Christian be bold?

It will help us to be bold if we glory in our hope. How easy it is to glory in earthly things. We can glory in the possession of a house or a new car or a dress. How often have you not heard some man glorying in the car that he was driving, in its beautiful lines, in its color, in the sweet purr of its motor. The more he glories in it the more sure he is that he has the best car made. Suppose we begin to glory in our hope in Christ. How our appreciation of that hope would grow!

Now follows **the Second Warning** of the epistle in vv. 7-19.

> 7 Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith,
> To-day if ye shall hear his voice,
> 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,
> Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness,
> 9 Where your fathers tried me by proving me,
> And saw my works forty years.
> 10 Wherefore I was displeased with this generation,
> And said, They do always err in their heart:
> But they did not know my ways;
> 11 As I sware in my wrath,
> They shall not enter into my rest.
>
> 12 Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: 13 but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: 14 for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: 15 while it is said,

> To-day if ye shall hear his voice,
> Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.
>
> 16 For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? 17 And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? 19 And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

The necessity of holding fast to the end suggests the warning found in the ninety-fifth Psalm. In passing we note again that the Holy Spirit is quoted as the author of this Psalm. The great danger is that in a Christian there might develop an "evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God," just as such hardening of heart developed amongst the Israelites in the wilderness.

How could there possibly be such a danger for a Christian who, through faith in Christ, has been brought into a living fellowship in the household of God? There are great difficulties in this Epistle for those who hold the theory expressed in the phrase: "Once saved, always saved." The Bible teaches that there is an eternal security for all believers, but it does not teach that it is impossible for a believer to fall away and become an unbeliever. The fact is that, if words mean anything, this very passage warns of the danger and God would certainly not waste such solemn warnings if the danger were not real and actual.

It is because of "the deceitfulness of sin" that the heart can be hardened. When we hear the voice of God warning us against sin and we choose to sin rather than to heed His voice, then that choice is registered in our very nature by the hardening of the heart. Sin seems to offer us some pleasure and for the moment it does give the sinner a thrill of some kind, but the permanent effect produced is a hardening of the heart. This can go on gradually to the point where even the one who has been a believer gives up his faith in Christ. We are partakers of Christ only on condition that we "hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." As the voice of God reaches our hearts, warns us of sin, we are to flee to Christ in confession and in the confidence that He will forgive us and deliver us. Then we are partakers of Christ.

If, on the other hand, we resent God's warnings, we oppose them, we refuse to yield, then we are hardening our hearts and we are turned in the direction which will finally lead us to apostasy. This progress of sin and its effect was very evident amongst the Israelites, as is pointed out in Ch. 3. 16–19. First they provoked, then they sinned, then they continued in their disobedience until they were established in unbelief and therefore were not able to enter the promised land.

b) Better than Joshua. Ch. 4. 1–11

4. 1 Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. 3 For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said,

As I sware in my wrath,
They shall not enter into my rest:

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; 5 and in this place again,

They shall not enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, 7 he again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before),

> To-day if ye shall hear his voice,
> Harden not your hearts.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

This brings up the thought in which the author is able to make a comparison between Jesus and Joshua, namely that of **the promised rest.** Ch. 4. For the Israelites there was a promised land which they hoped to enter. For us, too, there is "**a promise of entering into his rest**" and we should fear lest any one of us should even "**seem to have come short of it.**" "**For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they.**" And he has already revealed that the good tidings preached unto us are much better than the good tidings preached unto them. But whether it be the people of old or whether it be us, God's good tidings will profit us nothing unless the truth of God be united with our lives by faith. Here we see faith as the spiritual organ which appropriates the promises of God so as to unite them with our very life.

Taking the thought from the statement in the ninety-fifth Psalm: "**They shall not enter into my rest,**" chapter four shows us that **Jesus is a better leader than Joshua** because He can lead us into a better rest than that into which Joshua led the people of Israel. In order to bring out the meaning of this rest in its fulness, he discusses it from various viewpoints and distinguishes it from other rests.

The discussion concerning the rest can be summed up under four heads.

1. The promised rest—Ch. 4. 1–2

a. We, too, have a promised rest as also did Israel.

b. We should fear to even seem to have come short of it.

c. This rest is to be entered by faith. **"For we who have believed do enter into that rest."**

2. God's rest—Ch. 4. 3–5

Our promised rest is to be distinguished from God's rest. It is true that God has said, **"They shall not enter into my rest."** But when he said "my rest," He was speaking of something else than His resting on the seventh day. God's rest from His creative work on the seventh day is in Scripture spoken of as in the past, whereas in this ninety-fifth Psalm, He speaks of something future: **"They shall not enter into my rest."**

3. Joshua's rest—Ch. 4. 6–8

We now also see that God had in mind another rest than Joshua's rest. "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience." They not only failed to enter the promised land but they also failed to enter into that rest of which God was speaking in the Psalm. And that He does not refer to Joshua's rest is evident because He defines **"a certain day, To-day,"** and He said this **"in David**

so long a time afterward.'' That is, even David, who lived so long after Joshua was given to speak of a rest that was still future. **''For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day.''**

The King James Version of the Bible reads: **''If Jesus had given them rest,''** and the Greek does have the name Jesus in the text. The reason for this is that in the Greek Joshua and Jesus are the same, but there can be no doubt that He is speaking of Joshua and comparing Joshua's rest with that which Jesus can give us.

This brings up the interesting study of Joshua as a type of Jesus Christ. Moses is a type of Jesus from Bethlehem to Calvary. Joshua is a type of Jesus seated at the right hand of God and by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives giving us victory over our enemies and causing us to take possession of all the promises of God.

As a type he also falls short and therefore there are many interesting contrasts between Joshua and Jesus Christ. A reading of the Book of Joshua for the purpose of seeing in it types of the Christian experience is very profitable.

4. **The Sabbath rest**—Ch. 4. 9–11

''There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.'' The sabbath rest is for all the people of God, not for the Israelites only. There is no doubt but that it will be fully experienced in the glory that is to come in the heavenly Canaan. But it also is experienced here and now. This is evident in v. 10: **''For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his.''**

Here is the very essence of the Christian way of salvation. **"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** When we recognize our absolute helplessness, when we realize that there is nothing that we can do in order to pay for our sins and get right with God, then we are ready to come to Jesus and let Him do the saving. Salvation has already been provided by Him and all that we are to do is to rest in that fact.

To be saved through Jesus Christ is not a matter of trying to be good and holy, or trying to follow Jesus. It is a matter of admitting the absolute impossibility of being good and resting in the work that Jesus Christ has done when He "bore our sins in His body on the tree."

This is also true of the living of the Christian life. Just as we are completely helpless in making ourselves members of the household of God, so are we also helpless in conquering the enemies which now possess the territory of our hearts. We need the One who is greater than Moses and Joshua and the way of faith is the way of admitting our own helplessness, telling the Lord Jesus the exact situation and trusting that He will do that which it is impossible for us to do.

It is impossible to trust Jesus for too much. We are to have faith that in the measure that we admit continually the actual condition of our life and ask Him to make it right, we may rest in the assurance that His saving power is at work to produce in us the better life that will glorify His name.

"Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest." Here is a remarkable paradox. We are to work hard to enter into rest. We are, in other words, to fight the fight of faith. The struggle and the effort comes in this that we are to give up any confidence in the power of self and rest entirely in the mercy and grace of God in Christ. This is a labor and a fight for us because of the essential selfishness of our own nature. This diligence we must never give up as long as we are in this life or else we will **"fall after the same example of disobedience."**

> 12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.
>
> 14 Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.

There are **three things to help us to enter into the rest.** They are:

1. The searching Word of God. As we read and study His Word we find that it is alive with the power of God and able to reveal to us our whole inner life down into its deepest secret recesses.

The expression "quick to discern" is a translation of the Greek word from which we have the English word "critic." This is the only place in the New Testament where it is used. It is indeed interesting to note that God speaks of His Word as being the critic of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We are not to be the critics of the Word of God, but we are to let the Word criticize our lives. In the measure that we permit it to show us our failures and shortcomings, how glad we will be that we may flee to Jesus with it all.

2. **The seeing eye of God.** Since there is absolutely nothing that can be hid from Him anyway, should we not hasten to Him to tell Him everything in our lives that His Word has shown us to be not right?

3. **The sympathetic High Priest.** He is a Great High Priest. He has passed through the heavens, not only through an earthly temple. He is Jesus, the Son of God. He is sympathetic because He has been "in all points tempted like as we" and can therefore be deeply "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." But He is able to deliver us because He Himself has been without sin.

Since He is at the throne of God in heaven, that throne is a throne of grace to which we may draw near with boldness. If we come confessing our sins, failures, weaknesses, we will receive mercy in forgiveness. And then as we go out into the experiences of life we will find in each instance that His grace is with us to help us in time of need.

This corresponds with the statements of Jesus in His invitation: **"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** When we bring our sins and burdens to Him, in His mercy He forgives, thus **giving** us rest. **"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."** That is, having come to Jesus and been **given rest at the throne,** we go out into life as His disciples and in every experience of discipleship **find rest** unto our souls. We **find** that He is near and able and willing to help.

The theme of the High Priest has now been definitely introduced and is taken up in detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Be sure to work on the following suggestions for study in order that you might be able to follow the comments which will be given in chapters 5 and 6.

Suggestions for Study—Chs. 5 and 6

1. List the qualifications of a high priest.

2. How did Jesus fulfill these qualifications?

3. Did Jesus have to offer for His own sins? If not, how can He bear gently with the ignorant and erring? Study Ch. 4. 15 in this connection.

4. List the particulars in which Jesus is set forth as better than Aaron.

5. In Ch. 5. 11 through 6. 12 state in your own words:
1) The rebuke.
2) The exhortation.
3) The warning.
4) The encouragement.

6. What are the two immutable things upon which we can base our assurance with absolute certainty?

IV

A BETTER HIGH PRIEST

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest." Ch. 8. 1. From this statement it is evident that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews considers the theme of the high priest to be the climax of his demonstration that Jesus is the divine and perfect Saviour. Before he takes up the presentation of Jesus as the High Priest in detail, he has, on several occasions, introduced the subject as in 2. 17; 3. 1 and 4. 14–16.

C. A Better High Priest. Chs. 5-7

We shall now study chapters five and six and see how Jesus as a High Priest fulfills all the required qualifications and is better than Aaron. After the exhortation in Ch. 6 the author shows in Ch. 7 that He is of a higher order than the Levitical, being of the order of Melchizedek. According to his usual method, he has introduced the name of Melchizedek three times before he develops that part of the theme fully in Ch. 7.

When he compares Jesus Christ with Aaron he views Him **in His humiliation.** When he compares Him with Melchizedek he views Him **in His exaltation** as the resurrected, ever-living and ascended High Priest. It is because of the High Priest who has died for us that we may draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy. It is because of the High Priest who has risen from the dead and is now living for us that we will find grace to help us in time of need.

In His death and resurrection "**he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation**" (5. 9). In the "**power of an endless life**" He is able "**to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them**" (7. 25).

We thus have in the High Priest everything that we need. We have the privilege to draw near to God, the power to live a better life of victory over sin.

Turning now to the first part of Ch. 5 we see two points developed:

1. Jesus, like Aaron, has all the qualifications required for high priest.

2. Jesus is better than Aaron.

1. The qualifications for high priest. Ch. 5. 1–4

> **5. 1 For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2 who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; 3 and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4 And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron.**

1) "**From among men.**" If the Son of God was to be man's High Priest the incarnation was absolutely necessary so that He could be taken from among men. Only if He were taken from among men could He be "**appointed for men in things pertaining to God.**"

In this connection it is necessary to distinguish between the office of prophet and priest. The prophetic office represents God to man. The priestly office represents man in the things pertaining to God. The New Testament gospel ministry is altogether a prophetic office since it is entrusted with the work of bringing God's message to man. In the Church of Jesus Christ there is no special class of priests, for every born-again person has the privilege of coming directly to the throne of grace through the High Priest, and we need no more, "**because he abideth forever and hath his priesthood unchangeable.**"

Now it is in things pertaining to God that we especially need help. In things pertaining to man and our life in this world we have some measure of ability to help ourselves. But in the things pertaining to God every human being not only is absolutely helpless but because of his sin is absolutely shut out from the presence of God. But now there is one Man who not only has the right to enter into the presence of God but who, because He also is God, has united manhood with the deity. In Jesus Christ manhood and Godhood are united in one person.

The second reason why He must be taken from among men is that He may "**offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.**" It is evident that if a gift and a sacrifice for sin was to be presented to God on behalf of man, it was necessary that it be done by a man. Only so would it be man's sacrifice and a payment for man's sin. It is surely impossible to escape the doctrine of vicarious atonement in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The third reason why He must be from among men is that he might "**bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with**

infirmity.'' These words are all very suggestive. The Old Testament high priest sympathized with the one who came and confessed sin because he himself had had the same experience. He also realized that many failures were not intentional but the result of ignorance, and, realizing his own limitations he could feel for such an erring one.

Now when God gave His Son to be our High Priest, He permitted Him to be incarnate in order that He might pass through the same experiences as we do and thus be able to bear gently with us. Let us be sure that when we come to Jesus to confess sin, He is not cross nor angry but full of kindness and sympathy. This attitude of our High Priest has already been made use of in Ch. 4. 15: **''For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.''**

But now we read in Ch. 5. 3 that the high priest, by reason of his own infirmity **''is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.''** This would immediately raise the question whether or not Jesus Christ had to offer for His own sins. The author, however, has definitely made such a thought impossible by his statement in 4. 15, that He **''hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.''**

Someone might ask the question here whether or not Jesus can really be sympathetic with us in our temptations in view of the fact that even though He was tempted, yet He was absolutely sinless. There are two forceful answers to this. One is that only the absolutely pure, sinless nature, the nature which has never had its feelings dulled by the contact with sin, can really realize how hideous sin is and experience the awfulness of its temptation. Therefore it is said of Jesus in Ch. 2 as the High Priest, that "**he suffered being tempted**" and in the study of that chapter we pointed out that we are so unlike Him in this because we can enjoy being tempted, not realizing the hideousness of sin.

The second answer is that only He has felt the full force of temptation who has not yielded to it. The most helpful comment I have ever read on this is one by Holmes, quoted by Griffith Thomas in his book on Hebrews ("Let Us Go On"—p. 56).

"The question therefore arises: Can one whose human nature was both without any hereditary taint and also from its union with the divine nature necessarily incapable of sin, be said to have endured real temptation, or to have been 'in all points tempted like as we are'? The answer seems to be that only he has felt the full force of temptation who has never yielded to it. Against Him who stood firm the whole conceivable power of temptation was exerted. He experienced it at all points. The fact that through the union of the two natures it was impossible for Him to yield takes nothing either from the force of the temptation which attacked Him or from the completeness of His knowledge of it. To take a simple illustration: a breakwater conceivably might be so constructed that it would be impossible for the sea to break it. Such would endure the utmost power of the waves, whilst a weaker one might succumb before the full force had been felt. No doubt a moral example is more complete when it is set by one who, in every respect, is under exactly the same moral circumstances as ourselves. But had Christ come, not merely 'in the **likeness** of sinful flesh' but in flesh that was actually tainted with original sin, He could neither have been our Redeemer nor a perfect model of humanity. Nor does the truth that Christ was incapable of sin impair His moral liberty. God is the one Being who is perfectly free, but God cannot sin. Liberty in its highest sense does not carry with it the capacity of doing evil'' (Holmes, p. 191).

2) **The second great qualification for high priest is that he be such by divine appointment, 5. 4.** The sovereign God surely has a perfect right to say who shall come into His holy presence. Every sinful man is positively excluded from the presence of God by his sin. **''Our God is a consuming fire.''** God's holiness could not tolerate the presence of sin. Therefore He has appointed His only begotten Son, who, having lived the life of man, yet sinless, is risen from the dead. Him He has appointed to be the Man who will represent mankind to God and there is absolutely no other approach to God than through Him.

Here is one of the irreconcilable differences between the theological liberal and the evangelical. The liberal holds that man may find his own way to God, that everyone who presumes to worship God is acceptable to Him, whether he be Mohammedan, Jew, Confucianist, Unitarian or what not. But the Word of God plainly sets forth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only and exclusive way to the Father. Is this intolerant? Far from it. It is the love of God. In His mercy and love He has found a way by which His holiness can receive sinners and it is because it is in fact the only existing way that He also must lovingly tell us that there is no other way.

a) Better Than Aaron. Ch. 5. 5-10

5 So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,
Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee:

6 as he saith also in another place,
Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.
7 Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, 8 though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; 10 named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

From the two points in which Jesus Christ was like Aaron and thus qualifies for High Priest, the author procedes naturally to the points in which **He is better than Aaron.** They are at least four:

1) **In His Sonship.**
2) **In His eternal priesthood.**
3) **In that He was perfected.**
4) **In that He became the author of eternal salvation.**

He does not develop any further the first point that Jesus is the Son of God because he has taken that up fully in the first and second chapters. Nor does he at this time develop the second point of His eternal priesthood, because he will take up the order of Melchizedek in Ch. 7.

He does dwell on the third point of **His being made perfect** and shows us that our Lord Jesus Christ, "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Ch. 5. 8). This learning of obedience led Him all the way through the Garden of Gethsemane. No doubt the author is giving us a picture of Gethsemane in the words **"who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong cry-**

ing and tears.'' He also looks beyond the cross to the resurrection in the phrase: **''unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear.''** According to this it would seem that Christ's prayer in Gethsemane was granted, not in taking away the cup so that He would not have to die, but in that God saved Him out of death by the resurrection.

When it is said here that He **''learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect,''** it does not mean that Jesus was ever imperfect. The author has already plainly told us that Christ was without sin. It does not mean that He ever had to be corrected because of disobedience, but it means that He learned obedience experimentally. Every day that Jesus lived as a man He walked in perfect obedience to the heavenly Father in the very same conditions in which man lives. We remember Jesus' own claim, **''I do always the things that are pleasing unto him.''** We can therefore have the assurance that Jesus Christ has an experimental knowledge of what it means to give obedience to God.

Then too, as He was tested out in every human situation and never failed, He was perfected or established and never has to go through that testing again in order to be the author of eternal salvation.

It is as **the author of eternal salvation** that He, in the fourth place, is better than Aaron. The whole line of priesthood and all it stood for by way of ceremonies and sacrifices could never provide salvation for man, but was designed for the purpose of pointing out how far man was from God.

We must observe the statement here that He became the author of eternal salvation to "**all them that obey him.**" Does this mean that salvation is not by faith? Nay, rather it means that faith is obedience and that faith obeys Jesus Christ. The first step in obedience to Jesus Christ is that we come to Him with the burden of the guilt of our sin and allow Him to take care of our relationship to God.

Now instead of developing the point of His eternal priesthood and the order of Melchizedek, which he has twice mentioned, the author stops characteristically for an **exhortation and warning.** This hortatory section is from 5. 11 to 6. 20. It can be grouped under four heads:

1. **A rebuke.**
2. **An exhortation.**
3. **A warning.**
4. **An encouragement.**

1. The rebuke. Ch. 5. 11–14.

> 11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. 12 For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. 13 For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. 14 But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

The author of Hebrews finds a difficulty in going on with the demonstration of Jesus Christ, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, not because he is not himself sufficiently enlightened but because he realizes that his readers "are become dull of hearing." How many a teacher of the Word of God has felt the same hindrance in his work, realizing that those to whom he is speaking are not able to follow him because of their dullness of spiritual perception!

"Ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food."

The occasion then, for this rebuke is that they have not grown in their spiritual life but remain babes. How many babes God has, people who are perfectly satisfied when they have received Jesus as Saviour. Having come to that assurance they settle down in self-complacency. They never desire to press on into wider and deeper experiences in Christ.

The reason for this lack of growth and development is given in 5. 14. There must be "solid food" for those who are to become full grown men, but they will not want solid food and they will not be able to digest solid food unless they "**by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.**" It is by giving resistance to the things of the devil working through the world and our own flesh that our senses are exercised in discerning good and evil.

Here is the plain reason why so many Christians never grow and develop. They compromise with the flesh and with the world. They are not willing to judge as sin the things that plainly are sin according to God's Word. They drift along with the world in its manners and its pleasures. After a while they cannot discern between good and evil and are soon entangled in much that is evil. Then they neither have time nor desire for the meat of the Word of God.

2. The Exhortation. Ch. 6. 1-3

6. 1 Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit.

The rebuke naturally leads to **the exhortation that we should "press on unto perfection."** Let me remind again of the meaning of the word "perfection" as referring to the mature Christian experience in contrast with a rudimentary one.

Many have puzzled over whether the author, in mentioning the various doctrines in 6. 1–2, is referring to Old Testament or New Testament teachings. Since he calls them the first principles of Christ, may they not be considered as the foundation teachings of Christianity whether they be found in the Old Testament or the New. He wants them to realize that there is more than those principles in the Christian life.

3. The Warning. Ch. 6. 4–8

4 For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: 8 but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.

To those who hold the predestination doctrine often expressed in the phrase: "Once saved, always saved," this passage offers great difficulties. There are two ways in which they try to get around its plain and evident meaning.

Some say that those described here have never been saved. They have only "tasted the good word of God" but have never personally appropriated it. They therefore do not fall away from a saved condition but from an enlightened condition.

Others, however, realize that this is doing violence to the evident meaning of the Word of God and admit that this passage must refer to those who are actually saved. Only of such could it be said that they "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit." Then in order to still hold the un-Biblical doctrine of "Once saved, always saved," they explain this as being a supposed case, which, in other words, would be stated thus: If a saved person should fall away it would be impossible to renew him unto repentance. And the purpose is to show how terrible it would be for a saved person to fall away since his judgment would be certain. But it ought to be evident to any thinking person that the Holy Spirit could not do such a ridiculous thing as to warn Christians in such a solemn manner of that which is an impossibility and never can happen.

How then is this passage to be taken? Evidently the Holy Spirit means to warn those who are saved but who are not developing in Christian life that unless they grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ they actually are in danger of falling away. This, the author has revealed, need not be a sudden fall. In fact, he has indicated that it begins with neglect of the Word which results in drifting. The drifting one falls into sin and sin is deceitful in that it produces hardening of the heart. In this condition of a hardened heart there is great danger of falling away and crucifying the Son of God afresh.

It is true that the Bible teaches that there is an eternal security of the believer. But the Bible does not teach that a believer has lost the right of being a free moral agent. The believer must "**hold fast the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end**" (3. 14). "**Whose house are we if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end**" (3. 6). "**But my righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul**" (10. 38, 39).

There is absolutely nothing that can separate the believer from God as long as he draws near unto God through Jesus Christ, who is able to save unto the uttermost. But should he of his own free will choose to neglect the Word and prayer, he will drift in the direction of sin. Should he choose to give himself to sin his heart will be hardened and he will enter into unbelief. In unbelief he can crucify the Son of God afresh, and then he has fallen away.

The question now arises whether this falling away is identical with the sin against the Holy Spirit and that it can therefore never be forgiven.

First, I think it can be definitely said that the one described here is most certainly progressing in the direction of the sin against the Holy Spirit. If he continues in his course, the result will be that which is described in Ch. 10. 26–31, where the treading under foot of the Son of God advances to the doing of despite unto the Spirit of grace.

But the sin against the Holy Spirit, which, according to Jesus' own words, is unforgiveable, is evidently a condition or state of heart and only God can judge when that state has been reached in which the Holy Spirit must depart from such a sinner. It would seem that both those who have not been saved and those who have been saved can commit the sin against the Holy Spirit. That is, if the former have had the enlightment and the call of the Holy Spirit through the Word and have definitely continued to reject until their heart is hardened and the Holy Spirit must leave them.

But the sin described here in Hebrews, of course, can only be committed by those who have been saved in Christ and have turned from Him and fallen away. The warning sections in Hebrews are written for the purpose of showing the awful consequences of a Christian turning away from Christ in unbelief. Even such a one can also come to the stage in which his sin cannot be forgiven.

In the second place, there are some who say that the sin described here in chapter six has not yet reached the stage of the sin against the Holy Spirit. The force of v. 6 might be as follows: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance the while (or as long as) they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." That is, as long as they continue in the attitude of crucifying the Son of God afresh it is impossible to produce repentance in them for any sin. If they are to be renewed they will, of course, first have to realize their awful sin of crucifying the Son of God afresh.

However, there can be no doubt that the Word is here warning us that the Christian who has thus fallen has gone far in the direction in which his heart will be hardened by that judicial hardening in which he can never repent.

We must be careful here in order that we may not terrify some souls and cause them to think that they cannot be saved because they have drifted into sin and even crucified the Son of God afresh. It might surely be safely said that if anybody desires forgiveness and in that desire is willing to confess every sin, it is the Holy Spirit of God who has produced that desire and such a sinner can obtain mercy at the throne of grace for Jesus' sake.

The warning is pointed by the illustration of the land that has been blessed because it has brought forth fruit, whereas if a land that has had advantages only brings forth thorns and thistles then "it is rejected and nigh unto a curse." "Whose end is to be burned" refers, of course, to the thorns and thistles on the fruitless land, but by illustration it also refers to those who do not repent of their crucifying the Son of God afresh.

4. The Encouragement. Ch. 6. 9–20

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: 10 for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end: 12 that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself, 14 saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. 17 Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; 18 that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: 19 which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil; 20 whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

One can almost hear a sigh of relief as the author passes from this dreadful warning into the encouragement. **"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."** Only here does he call the readers "beloved," indicating that he would be especially tender now in contrast to the sharpness of his warning. He exhorts them **"to love that works"**; **"to hope that endures"**; and **"to faith that is patient."** God will not forget such works of love. Hope that endures to the end will bring full assurance. The faith that exercises patience will inherit the promise.

It is interesting to note that the author has mentioned as examples those **"who through faith and patience inherit the promises."** Later on, in Ch. 11, he will bring out such examples in wonderful detail. For the present he mentions one example, namely, that of Abraham. He has thus again, according to his usual method, introduced subjects before he takes them up. Abraham is particularly mentioned since he intends in Ch. 7 to use Abraham in his experience with Melchizedek, proving thereby that Jesus Christ is greater than both Abraham and Melchizedek.

But now he shows that for us there is great encouragement in that we not only, like Abraham, have received a promise but that for us the promise is confirmed by God's oath. We therefore possess "**two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie.**" Upon such foundation should rest our hope. This Christian hope is likened to "**an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us.**"

While traveling on a steamer on the Yangtze River in China, I observed a little incident which might serve to illustrate this idea of an anchor within the veil. The Yangtze River was in flood and the current was so swift that the steamer could not land at the wharf under its own power because it would be carried past the wharf by the current. As it approached the wharf a Chinese coolie in a very small boat rowed out from shore, standing in the stern of the boat facing forward, and pushing with all his might on his oars according to the Chinese custom. When, after much effort, he drew near to the steamer, a rope was thrown out to him from the ship. This rope he made fast to his little boat and then pushed away for shore again as fast as he could go. At the wharf many hands were ready to grasp the rope, by means of which a heavy hawser was then looped over the capstan on the wharf. Then the machinery in the steamer began to pull on this hawser and thus pulling away the course was held straight for the wharf in spite of the drag of the current. So the Lord Jesus Christ came out from the shores of heaven and God became flesh and dwelt among us. Having died for our sins He rose again, uniting humanity with God in glory. Now our hope is secure, or anchored, with Him within that veil in glory and as long as, by the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we pull on that hope our course will be held straight until we land on that "beautiful shore."

Suggestions for Study—Ch. 7

1. Be sure to look up Melchizedek in Genesis and in Psalm 110.

2. In how many points is Melchizedek like the Son of God in 7. 1–3?

3. In what points is he proved to be greater than Abraham?

4. Why does the author want to prove Melchizedek to be greater than Abraham?

5. In v. 11–28 find the following comparisons:

Eternal as compared to temporal.
Spiritual as compared to carnal.
Established as compared to without oath.
Perpetual as compared to changing.
Perfect as compared to imperfect.
Stable as compared to infirmity.

b) Better Order Than The Levitical. Ch. 7. 1-28

7. 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

Once more the author has come to the theme of **Jesus, a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,** and now in Ch. 7 he takes up this part of his theme in which he shows us Jesus the High Priest in His exaltation. It is to be noted that the Son of God is not made like unto Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is made like unto the Son of God, which indicates that Melchizedek is introduced in Scripture in order that he might be a type of the Son of God.

We find Melchizedek as a historical type in Genesis, as a prophetical type in Psalms, and in the fulfillment of both in Hebrews.

In 7. 1–3 we see that **Melchizedek** is a type of **Jesus Christ** in three points.

1. In his name, which means "**King of righteousness.**"

2. In his office as King of Salem, which means "**King of peace.**"

3. In that he was "**without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.**"

In this third point the author makes use of the fact that in the story of Melchizedek in Genesis, a book full of genealogies, God has caused the record of Melchizedek to be brought in without any reference to his genealogy, the beginning of his days or the end of his life. He simply enters the story of Abraham and departs again. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we find out that God had a purpose, not only in what He caused to be recorded but also in what He caused to be left out of the story. The very fact that these things are left out in a book which definitely records the beginning of days and the end of life of so many characters, causes Melchizedek to stand out by contrast. He is thus "**made like unto the Son of God.**"

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils. 5 And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. 7 But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9 And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; 10 for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

But **Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, and thus also greater than Levi.** Therefore Jesus is greater than Levi. This is proved by the fact that Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils which he took in the battle with the kings to Melchizedek, and in the second place, by the fact that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and "**the less is blessed of the better.**"

Then the argument is made that since Levi was at that time in the loins of Abraham, the Levitical order of priesthood was evidently a lesser order than that of Melchizedek. This, of course, is true because Melchizedek was a type of Christ and Jesus Christ is the only existing High Priest of the order of Melchizedek.

11 Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13 For he of whom these

things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. 15 And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, 16 who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life: 17 for it is witnessed of him,

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.

18 For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness 19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God. 20 And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath 21 (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him,

The Lord sware and will not repent himself,
Thou art a priest for ever);

22 by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. 23 And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing: 24 but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. 25 Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore.

The rest of the chapter is now given over to a **comparison of the Levitical priesthood and that of the exalted Jesus Christ.** V. 11—Even while the Levitical priesthood existed it was announced that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, which indicated that there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood. Since the priesthood was changed it was also necessary to change the law concerning priesthood, because this promise of another priest coming after the order of Melchizedek referred to a person who even came from another tribe, namely that of Judah: **"As to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests."** From all of which it is evident that **the Levitical priesthood was temporal,** while **Christ's priesthood is eternal.** This is the first comparison.

The second comparison shows that the **Levitical priesthood is carnal,** while **Christ's priesthood is spiritual.** He has been made a priest "**not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.**" Because He is risen from the dead and lives forevermore, His priesthood is not a matter of certain commandments and regulations, but a matter of sharing His life eternal with those who trust in Him.

The third comparison shows that the **Levitical priesthood was set up by a law** which made nothing perfect, was weak and unprofitable, and therefore is disannulled. But in **Christ's priesthood** there is a "**bringing in of a better hope,**" through which we draw nigh unto God, and this hope is **established by God's oath,** which can never be changed. "**By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant.**"

The fourth comparison shows that the **Levitical priesthood was a changing one.** Those priests were "**many in number because that by death they are hindered from continuing.**" But **Christ's priest-**

hood is perpetual because, being raised from the dead, **"he abideth faithful"** and there is no need of any successor to His priesthood. **"Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."**

The fifth comparison shows that the **Levitical priesthood could not satisfy** our needs. Those high priests had to offer up sacrifices for their own sins, but we needed a High Priest who would be **"holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,"** in order that He might offer up Himself as a sacrifice, not over and over again, but **"once for all."** Only such a High Priest would exactly fit into the needs of fallen sinners. **Such a High Priest is Christ.** Jesus—Just Exactly Suits Us Sinners.

And finally, a comparison is made between **the infirmity of the Levitical priests** who were appointed by the law and **the perfection of the Son of God,** who after the law was appointed by God's word of the oath. That is, the Levitical priests, because of their infirmity fell into sins, but the Son of God victoriously met every test and was established or perfected in each step of His experience until He finally reached glory, where He is our representative **"in the power of an endless life."** In Him we not only have forgiveness of sins, but also grace to live a life in which we shall have power to say "no" to sin.

Suggestions for Study—Chs. 8. 1—9. 12

1. Read the whole letter and see how this portion is a part of the section which sets forth that Jesus as a High Priest has brought in a better covenant:

Based on better promises—Ch. 8.
With a better sanctuary—Ch. 9.
With a better sacrifice—Chs. 9 and 10.

2. Can you see how the themes: sanctuary, sacrifices, promises, are introduced in Ch. 8. 1–6?

3. What is the evidence that even while it existed God considered the old covenant passing and incomplete?

4. List the things that were better in the promise of the new covenant.

5. In this promise can you see how God provides for obedience, consecration, fellowship, pardon?

6. Read in Exodus concerning the Tabernacle, especially Ch. 40. Read in Leviticus, Ch. 16, concerning the Day of Atonement.

7. According to Hebrews 9, what did the Holy Spirit signify by the ceremony of the Day of Atonement? Why is that better which Christ has done?

V

A BETTER COVENANT

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest." Evidently the author has made his chief point when he has set forth Jesus Christ as the great High Priest in His humiliation and exaltation. This point, however, is so much the chief point that he continues to develop it and all the rest of the Letter is really such a development.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 set forth the **better covenant** which God has made in and through this High Priest, a covenant based on **better promises** with a **better sanctuary** and a **better sacrifice.** In chapters 11, 12 and 13 the author sets forth the **better life** which those are enabled to live who accept Jesus Christ as their living High Priest.

We must bear in mind that the great purpose of the Letter is to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ not only died to save from the guilt of sin, but now lives and **"is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him."** Notice in this twenty-fifth verse of the seventh chapter, the expression: **"He is able to save."** The idea is that He has power to keep on saving, and that to the uttermost. **"To the uttermost"** covers the **past** and the **guilt** of sin. It suffices for the **present** and the **power** of sin and it is a glorious promise for the **future** when in heaven we shall even be saved from the **presence** of sin.

D. A Better Covenant. Chs. 8–10

8. 1 Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this high priest also have somewhat to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount. 6 But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises.

Verses 1–6 of chapter 8, form an introduction to this part of the Letter and again we have the usual method of introducing the themes before they are taken up. Always this introducing of the themes is not artificial but follows naturally, so here: **"We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."** And, since He is there in the heavens, the next thought is right at hand: **"A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man."** So His tabernacle has been introduced.

The word "true" used in describing the tabernacle, is very interesting. It would seem that the true things are in heaven, while on earth things are only copies and shadows. This corresponds with the use of the word "true" in the Gospel by John, where Jesus calls Himself: "the true bread," "the true vine," etc. This puts a glorious emphasis upon the reality of everything that is in heaven. We are by nature so earthbound that we feel that only material things are real, but without a doubt we shall see in glory the real things of which the material was only a shadow.

And so Christ is the better High Priest because He is serving in the true tabernacle. Verse four shows us that if He were on earth He could not be a high priest at all because He could not satisfy the demands of the law, since He was not of the tribe of Levi. But even when God commanded Moses to build the earthly tabernacle he was told that he should make it "**according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.**" That is, in the mount Moses saw the model which is in heaven and was instructed to build the tabernacle according to that model.

It is interesting to observe in Rev. 21. 22 that the apostle says of the heavenly Jerusalem: "**And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.**" This brings out the teaching that the tabernacle which Moses built was a copy of, a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. This he also develops in the first part of Chapter 9.

In verse three we have the introduction of the theme of sacrifice, and in verse six the theme of the better promises.

a) The Better Promises. Ch. 8. 7–13

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith,

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers
In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt;
For they continued not in my covenant,
And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put my laws into their mind,
And on their heart also will I write them:
And I will be to them a God,
And they shall be to me a people:
11 And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,
And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:
For all shall know me,
From the least to the greatest of them.
12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities,
And their sins will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.

Again a comparison is made between the old and the new. The **first** covenant was not faultless. This is brought out by the fact that even while it was in force the Lord announced a **new** covenant, which He would not have done if the first one had accomplished what He desired. Verse thirteen brings out the fact that this announcing of a new covenant of itself caused the former covenant to become old. A graphic illustration of this is how our mechanical devices become old, both on the market and in our estimation of them, as soon as new models are announced. A man may buy an automobile and not have driven it one hundred miles, and if a new model is announced, immediately his has depreciated in value and that even in his own estimation of it.

But concerning this **old covenant,** it could be seen that it not only was made old by the announcement of the new, but because of its failures and shortcomings it actually was becoming old and the presence of the new was causing it to be **"nigh unto vanishing away."**

Then, in the second place, the first covenant was not faultless because: **"They continued not in my covenant."** It reminds us of Paul's assertion that it was not that the law was a failure, but that man was a failure. Therefore, by means of the law it was impossible for God to ever bring man into a right relationship with Himself.

Therefore, which is the third reason for the finding fault with the old covenant, we read here: **"And I regarded them not, saith the Lord."** That is, on the basis of the law it was impossible for the Lord to regard man and receive him unto Himself. We must observe that these things are stated in the words which are being quoted from the prophet Jeremiah, and that, in these very promises spoken during the old covenant, God is declaring the reasons why He must bring in a new and better covenant. The promise, then, gives a glorious revelation of the nature of this new covenant.

In the **new covenant** the Lord would accomplish four things:

1. Obedience.

"I will put my laws into their mind, And on their heart also will I write them." It has been demonstrated by the failure of the old that if God's laws were ever to be fulfilled by man it would have to be by some changing of his very nature. For when man met the law of God in his own nature, more and more of the wickedness of that nature was brought out; but by the new covenant God would find a way to make His law live in the mind and heart of the believer.

2. Consecration.

"I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people." God will first consecrate Himself to them and then consecrate them to Himself.

3. Fellowship.

"And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: For all shall know me, From the least to the greatest of them." That is, there shall be no differences of rank and privilege in this new covenant so that some might have the privilege of knowing God more intimately than others and therefore be able to teach them "to know the Lord." But from the least to the greatest all should have the same privilege, in this new covenant, of intimate and personal fellowship with God in Christ.

4. Justification.

"For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And their sins will I remember no more." Here are plainly stated the two phases of justification, namely, the forgiveness of sin and the imputing of the righteousness of Christ, so that God does not remember the sins any more but sees the believer only in the holiness of his Saviour.

It is of interest to note that these four points are experienced in the reverse order from which we have them revealed here. That is, it is only on the basis of justification that we can have personal fellowship with God.

It is only because we are justified in Christ that God is consecrated unto us and we to Him. And it is only on the basis of that justification that we can experience the new birth in which God's laws are written in our very nature, that is, in the new nature received from Christ.

b) The Better Sanctuary. Ch. 9. 1–12

9. 1 Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; 4 having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally. 6 Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; 7 but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people: 8 the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing; 9 which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, 10 being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

11 But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, 12 nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

Here the same method is used of presenting the inadequacy of the first tabernacle in that it was only a type and not the real, the true tabernacle.

The tabernacle of the first covenant.

The author mentions some of the items concerning the tabernacle which Moses built. It is evident that he has chosen those items which particularly and strikingly refer to Christ. In the holy place we find the **candlestick** and the **table of showbread,** which are types of Jesus as the **Light of the world** and the **Bread of Life.**

In the Mosaic tabernacle the **golden altar of incense** was also found in the holy place, but here in Hebrews 9 it is mentioned in connection with the holy of holies. This has sometimes been pointed out as a Biblical inconsistency. However, it is to be remembered that Hebrews 9 is an interpretation, and without a doubt the meaning is that the golden altar of incense was to be considered as belonging to the holy of holies, even though it stood outside of the veil. This is significant. If it had been within the veil it could not have been approached by the priests in their daily ministrations, in which case there could have been no intercession, but in His mercy God placed it outside in order that it might be approached. And there was a lattice work above the veil through which the smoke of the incense could pass beyond the veil into the holy of holies. This suggests the teaching that God was willing to hear the prayers of intercession before Christ came into the world, because He knew that Christ would come and would accomplish a saving work.

In the holy of holies were the following: the **ark of the covenant,** which is a type of Christ; a golden pot holding the **manna,** another type of Christ; **Aaron's rod that budded,** still another type of Christ; the **tables of the covenant,** which were fulfilled in Christ; also, above the ark, the **mercy seat,** which speaks very particularly of what we have in Christ.

Having mentioned these things, the author says, "**Of which things we cannot now speak severally,**" indicating that it would be possible to show how they all are a type of Christ, but it was not his purpose to do so. He was hurrying on to the point that he particularly wanted to make. It suggests to us, however, that we ought to study the tabernacle from this viewpoint of seeking to see our Lord Jesus Christ in all its various items. How wonderful that God should cause such an object lesson to be placed in the midst of the children of Israel in order to teach them what God would do for them in Christ. And now we may read the detailed descriptions of the tabernacle and realize that God has recorded them in such detail in order that they might, even for us, cast a light upon our Lord Jesus Christ for our better understanding and appreciation of Him and His saving work. I want to refer you to a study on the Tabernacle and its symbolic meanings, found in my little guide to study on the Pentateuch.

The point, however, that the author particularly wants to make is that only the priests could go into the holy place and only the high priest could go into the holy of holies, and that only once in the year. And when he did so he had to bring a sacrifice of blood for himself as well as for the errors of the people. This took place on the Day of Atonement, which was a day of confession and self-affliction for the people of Israel, for they were admitting that their sins closed them out from the presence of God and were taught to realize that even their religious services had defiled the very tabernacle itself.

Now we read that by this the Holy Spirit would signify **"that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing."** That is, there was a very restricted access to God and not a wide open way for everyone who wanted to approach and find fellowship with God. This shows that the sacrifices, too, were inadequate for they could not set men free in their conscience and **"make the worshipper perfect,"** but were **"carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation."** That is, they were outward sacrifices of animals imposed to teach a lesson until the time of reformation should come, in which a sacrifice would be made by Christ once for all.

Summarizing then, this tabernacle of the first covenant was

1. A material type
2. With restricted access to God
3. With inadequate sacrifices.

Over against these three shortcomings of the tabernacle of the first covenant the author sets forth three glories of

The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle.

1. It is not of this creation, not made with hands, for it is in heaven itself.

2. Christ entered this holy place in heaven once for all. He does not have to enter every year to do over again that which He had done the year before, and the very fact that it was necessary to enter only once for all is the proof that Christ is **"a high priest of the good**

things to come." That is, that Christ as a High Priest can bring us into the possession of all those good things that were promised of old and all the good things that we shall know when we, too, enter into that same glory.

3. Christ's sacrifice was not the blood of goats and calves, but His own blood. The blood of goats and calves could never be a substitute for the life of all mankind. But by His own blood Christ "**obtained eternal redemption.**"

This brings us right up to the theme of the **better sacrifice,** in which the author will from many viewpoints show us how infinitely better was Christ's sacrifice of His own blood than the sacrifice of the blood of animals of the old covenant.

Truly if we study all these things prayerfully we cannot escape the deeper appreciation of what we have in Christ, and we will pray earnestly for the grace to appropriate all this in order that we might experimentally live out in our lives that saving grace which is ours in Christ.

Suggestions for Study—Chs. 9. 13—10. 39

1. Note how a series of comparisons are made between the Old Testament sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice. There are at least five series of comparisons.
2. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience, 9. 13–14. What comparisons between the old and the new?
3. The blood of Christ establishes the covenant, 9. 15–17. What comparisons between the old and the new?
4. The blood of Christ cleanses the heavens, 9. 18–28. What comparisons between the old and the new?
5. The blood of Christ fulfills the will of God, 10. 1–9. What comparisons between the old and the new?

6. The blood of Christ perfects the sanctified, 10. 10–18. What comparisons between the old and the new?

7. In 10. 19–39 note the exhortation, the warning and the reminder.

8. Can you see the references to faith, hope and love in 10. 19–25?

c) The Better Sacrifice. Ch. 9. 13—10. 18

In setting forth a better sacrifice the author continues to use the method of comparing the old and the new in order to show that the old was preparatory and inferior, whereas the new is the fulfillment and in every way superior. He shows us five superiorities of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

1. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience. Ch. 9. 13–14.

> 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The old. Under the old covenant the sacrifice consisted of the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer. These sacrifices were thus of animal blood, which in itself is of inferior value than that of man. These animal sacrifices also accomplished but a limited work, namely, "**sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh.**" The idea is that they did not take away any man's sins. If anyone was ceremonially defiled, according to the laws of Moses, he did not have a right to enter into the worship of the children of Israel. His defilement excluded him from the congregation until the required sacrificial ceremony had been carried out. Only then was he permitted to take part in the worship. Consequently, the sacrifice accomplished only an outward cleansing and was a sort of ticket of admission to the worship of Israel.

The new. If the above mentioned was all that the old covenant sacrifice could accomplish, "**how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**"

Here we see the blood of Christ as over against the blood of goats, etc. As a man Christ's blood is on an equality with man's blood. But we see here that His sacrifice has even greater value than if He were but a man, for it was through **the eternal Spirit** that He offered Himself **without blemish unto God.**

"**Through the eternal Spirit**" emphasizes His deity. The eternal Spirit of God dwelt in Him. And thus, although His sacrifice was that of His own human blood, it nevertheless had infinite value in the sight of God because it was done through the eternal Spirit. When Christ died on Calvary it was not only something that took place in a certain moment of time in history. Scripture tells us that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. And there is no doubt a sense in which Christ's death on Calvary is eternally present before God. It is to be remembered that God does not live in a succession of events as we do, limited as we are to time and space, but that the eternal God dwells in an eternal present.

That Christ was without blemish is, of course, the only way in which His sacrifice could be acceptable unto a holy God on behalf of sinful man.

Then too, in our relationship to God, it is not only the flesh that needs cleansing, but even more the conscience. The blood of animals could never cleanse the conscience but since Christ has died for man there is a marvelous ministry of the Holy Spirit, in which He can take the blood of Christ and apply it to the conscience of a penitent soul so as to wipe out of that conscience everything that would keep us from an intimate fellowship with the holy God, namely, all the sense of the guilt of our sin.

It is not only from the guilt of actual sins that our conscience needs to be cleansed, but also from dead works. Dead works would seem to be all the works that we do in the flesh. The natural man may do works that man would call good works, but because he is dead in trespasses and sins, such works are dead works in the sight of God. Although such works may serve man in an earthly and temporal sense, they can never serve the living God. Only when our conscience has been cleansed by the blood of Christ and we have been brought into a life union with God through Christ, can we serve the living God. But in such a life union with Christ even the least of our works, be it only so much as a cup of water given in His name, is a service to the living God.

What a glorious privilege it is to have a cleansed conscience! No one can claim to have a clean conscience in the sense of never having defiled it by the guilt of sin, but the Lord Jesus Christ offers to all a cleansed conscience. Surely every true Christian must prize a cleansed conscience above every other possession. This cleansed conscience we may have daily and continually by drawing near unto God in confession of sin and by faith accepting the cleansing in the blood of Christ.

2. The Blood of Christ establishes the covenant. Ch. 9. 15–17.

> 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. 17 For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth.

The old. Under the old covenant men were guilty of transgressions for which the old covenant provided no redemption. There were promises given under the old covenant, promises of an eternal inheritance, but no fulfillment of those promises. Therefore if there had been no new covenant there would have been no forgiveness and no salvation to those who lived under the old covenant. Therefore, even for those who lived under the old covenant it was absolutely necessary that there be a new covenant so that the transgressions under the old covenant might be forgiven and those who believed in the promises might look forward to a future eternal inheritance.

The new. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ was retroactive in its effects in that because Christ was slain from the foundation of the world, all who accepted the promises inherited salvation.

Now the author seems to play on the meaning of the word "covenant," and uses it both in the sense of an arrangement made between God and man, and in the sense of a testament or will. This idea of a testament or will is used by way of illustration which has been suggested by the expression "eternal inheritance." So he makes use of the fact that as long as a person who has made a will lives, that will is not in effect. The death of the testator is required to make the will effective. It is therefore in a two-fold sense that the blood of Christ has established the covenant. Both in the sense of being the sacrifice that has made payment for all sins, past, present and future, and also in the sense of His being the maker of a testament and that He was willing to die in order that the testament might become effective and His brethren might inherit eternal salvation.

3. The blood of Christ cleanses the heavens. Ch. 9. 18–28.

> 18 Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. 19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. 21 Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. 22 And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.
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> 23 It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: 25 nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by

year with blood not his own; 26 else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; 28 so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.

The old. The author now passes from the idea of testament to that of dedication. Moses was required to dedicate the old covenant with the blood of calves and goats. All the earthly things connected with the service of the first covenant were defiled because of the sinfulness of man. The sprinkling of the book itself and all the people, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, was for the purpose of teaching that all was defiled by sin. The law therefore emphasizes that "**all things are cleansed with blood and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.**" We can therefore see three things that feature the old covenant.

1) It was earthly and material things that needed to be cleansed.
2) The required cleansing was by blood in order to indicate that all was defiled by sin.
3) Forgiveness or remission of sin could only be on the basis of a life having been given instead of the life of the sinner. This, however, could never be accomplished by the old covenant sacrifice because animal life was not on an equality with human life and could never be accepted by God as a substitute.

The new. All the things done under the old covenant were in the nature of a copy, or symbolism, and therefore animal blood could be used, v. 23, "**but the heav-**

enly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.''

It is to be noted here that the heavenly things are set forth as the real things, whereas the things on earth were copies of the things in the heavens.

It also appears that in some sense even the heavenly things had been defiled by man's sin. The Bible indicates that the guilt of man's sin rises into heaven. God is spoken of as complaining that the stench reaches His nostrils. Certainly man's sins stand even in heaven as a separation between God and man. Therefore it was necessary for Christ to enter, not into a holy place which was but a pattern to the true, but into heaven itself to break through the barrier of sin that stood between us, and **''to appear before the face of God for us.''**

Should He have had to do this over and over again, year by year, it would have meant that He "must often have suffered since the foundation of the world," which is unthinkable. "But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," v. 26. In these words a number of things are emphasized. Only once was it necessary for Him to make the sacrifice because He did it through the eternal Spirit. Also, only once because it was done at the end or consummation of the ages, that is, all the ages are summed up in what Christ did when He died on Calvary.

''He was manifested to put away sin,'' because sin stood as the barrier between God and man, reaching in its consequences even into heaven, and if man was to be brought back into fellowship with God it was necessary that sin be put away. This putting away of sin required a sacrifice and the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself as such.

The fact that the sacrifice had to be made only once is emphasized in v. 27 by the reference to the common destiny of mankind. As every man meets death only once, and after death meets judgment, so Christ, being a true man, could not die more than once. Christ could not come back and do over again what He did in dying once. For then His experience would be different from that of His fellowmen. If He did not succeed in putting away sin by the one sacrifice, He could not come back to try again. It had to be done once for all.

However, as the high priest under the old covenant went into the holy of holies bringing the sacrifice, and then came out again to bless the people who stood waiting for him to bring them the blessing of God, so Christ also, as the great High Priest, **"shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation."** Here again we see that the old covenant ceremony was only a type. It has its reality and fulfillment in Christ's coming again. When He comes again it will be apart from sin, because the sin question was settled once for all on Calvary. It will be to share with them that wait for Him the complete results of what He accomplished for them when He won their salvation.

4. The blood of Christ fulfills the will of God. Ch. 10. 1–9.

> 10. 1 For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. 2 Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith,

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,
But a body didst thou prepare for me;
6 In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure:
7 Then said I, Lo, I am come
(In the roll of the book it is written of me)
To do thy will, O God.

8 Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), 9 then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

In Ch. 10 the author is really summarizing what he already has said concerning the sacrifice, not however by the way of bare repetition, for he brings in rich new thoughts in addition to what he already has said.

The old. In referring to the law again he re-emphasizes the fact that it contained only a shadow of the good things to come. Its sacrifices were proved to be inadequate, both by the fact that they were offered year by year and by the fact that the worshippers continued to have a consciousness of sins.

He then points out the real purpose of the sacrifices, namely, that in them "**there is remembrance made of sins year by year.**" There is, of course, a great contrast between a remembrance of sins and a taking away of sins, "**for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.**"

The new. The reason why Christ's sacrifice could take away sins was that it was a complete accomplishment of the will of God. Again we have a quotation from a Messianic Psalm which contains a beautiful reference to Christ. Even in the Psalm God made clear that it was not "**sacrifice and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin**" that God wanted. That is, the righteousness of God could never be satisfied with animal sacrifices. But God had prepared a body for His Son and the Son came to do the will of God. So He took away the animal sacrifices by doing the will of God, even to the extent of giving His own life blood in a sacrifice for sin. Therefore, when He says: "**Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God,**" it involves that which is set forth in v. 10: "**By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**"

The parenthetical statement in the Psalm: "**In the roll of the book it is written of me,**" is surely an interesting reference to the fact that the whole Old Testament is Christo-centric and cannot be understood apart from its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

5. The blood of Christ perfects the sanctified. Ch. 10. 10–18.

10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: 12 but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us; for after he hath said,

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them

After those days, saith the Lord:
I will put my laws on their heart,
And upon their mind also will I write them;
then saith he,
17 And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

The old. There was no perfection under the old covenant. The people were sanctified in the sense that God chose them and set them aside as His covenant people, but all the rites and ceremonies did not settle the sin question. Therefore we see the priests standing "**day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins.**"

The new. Here again we see in many points the superiority of the sacrifice which our Lord Jesus Christ made.

1) It was one sacrifice for sins forever.
2) "**He sat down on the right hand of God,**" indicating a finished and completed work. This is in contrast to the "standing" of the old covenant priests.
3) He is now the standard by which every man shall be judged. If any refuse to accept Him and His sacrifice for salvation, they are His enemies. So complete is His finished work that "**henceforth he is expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet.**"
4) His offering not only has made it possible for sinful men to be sanctified or set aside as holy unto God, but it also has the power of continuing the saving work until the one who has been sanctified is matured and finally perfected.

5) Because of His sacrifice there is a new testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is intensely interesting to note that this testimony of the Holy Spirit is through the Word of God. Because of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ the promises of God, as found in Jeremiah, and already made use of in Ch. 8, become a reality to those who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Thus he points out that in Jeremiah the Holy Spirit first spoke of the new covenant in which the Lord would put His laws upon their heart and write them upon their mind. And after He had said that, He said, "**And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.**" This indicates then a perfect restoration of the sinner to God. When God is so thoroughly satisfied with Christ's sacrifice and when it is possible for the sinner to experience the testimony of the Holy Spirit so that he has full assurance that his sins are all completely wiped out of the memory of God, then there is no necessity for any more offering for sin, neither on the part of Christ nor on the part of the sinner. Thank God, Christ's blood perfects them that are sanctified!

Now follows **the fourth exhortation and warning** section of the Epistle. As its author has set forth so marvelously the glories of what we have in Christ, he also shows with increasing severity the awful judgment that rests upon those who reject this only way of salvation. There are three divisions in this section and we will give a suggestive outline.

1. **The encouragement, vv. 19--25.**
   To enter into the holy place.

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 and having a great priest over the house of God; 22 let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, 23 let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised: 24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

a. **Four blessings, vv. 19–21.**

Boldness in the blood
The holiest is open
A new and living way
The great High Priest

b. **Four marks, v. 22.**

A true heart
The fulness of faith
Hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience
Body washed with pure water

c. **Four duties, vv. 23–25**

Faith
Hope
Love
Assembly

2. The warning, vv. 26–31.

Of the danger of deliberately living in sin.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. 28 A

man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: 29 of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

a. The fearful expectation, vv. 26–27
b. The sorer punishment, vv. 28–29
c. The fearful judge, vv. 30–31

3. The reminder, vv. 32–39.

That past blessings might continue unto victory.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; 33 partly, being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. 34 For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.

37 For yet a very little while,
He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.
38 But my righteous one shall live by faith:
And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him.
39 But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul.

a. The former sufferings, vv. 32–35
b. The need of patience, vv. 36–37
c. Faith unto the saving of the soul, vv. 38–39

There are a few points here which might require some additional comment although the meanings are quite clear in view of what we have seen in our studies thus far. It is evident that vv. 19–22 are based on the Old Testament worship in the temple. The blood of Jesus has opened a way, not into an earthly temple, but into the holy of holies itself. This way is a new and living way. That is, an ever efficacious way. It is new and living every day. It is a way that is exactly the kind of a way that every sinner needs under every circumstance and condition. It is a way through the veil. By making use of what God has offered us in Christ we are able to actually enter into fellowship with God in spite of the veil that exists between the visible and the invisible.

There is a question as to whether or not "**that is to say, his flesh**" refers to the veil or to the way. But it seems to me that we may think that as the veil in the temple was rent asunder from top to bottom when Christ died on Calvary, so also it was through the rending of His body that the way was opened into the holy place. Because of His death those things are taken away which hindered our access to a holy God.

Again we have the reference to the high priest as a point of encouragement. Because we have a great High Priest over the house of God we may draw near with boldness. He will take care of everything on our behalf. When we entrust ourselves to Him by faith with a true heart, that is, without any excuses or explanations for our sins, but with a full confession and desiring the cleansing in His blood, then our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body is washed with pure water.

These figures have reference to the consecration of the priests and indicate that by faith in Christ we have come into the privilege of priesthood, with access to God, who receives us for Christ's sake. This priesthood involves four duties, namely, faith, hope, love and assembly.

The life of faith, hope and love will be developed in chapters 11, 12 and 13. Of course, the duty of assembly may be included under that of love because to assemble together is a way of expressing love one to another. It is of value to note that the Bible here exhorts Christians to assemble together. It is necessary that we appreciate the privilege of the communion of saints. Christians very much need the strength of fellowship with one another in spiritual things. And if it was true then that "**ye see the day drawing nigh,**" how much more so is that true today. The author may have had reference to the destruction of Jerusalem which was approaching, but even so the destruction of Jerusalem as we realize from Christ's words on the subject, was a type of the coming day of judgment for the world.

It is absolutely necessary that we appropriate this privilege of fellowship with God and with one another in Christ, for if we do not, the result will be that we will go in the other direction, into a life of wilful sin.

We have seen how the author pictures the awful progress of apostasy. It begins with neglecting, which produces drifting. Drifting leads to sin and unbelief. Unbelief leads to a deeper falling away from the living God and such apostasy leads to a wilful life in sin. When he says "**if we sin wilfully,**" he does not refer to some isolated conscious sin, but to a definite wilful living in sin after having once been a living Christian. If such a one ever thinks of drawing near to God it can only be with a foretaste of the judgment that awaits him. No sincere Christians can read vv. 26–31 without a prayer to be kept from such awful danger. **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."**

The third division of this section shows that past experiences are to help us in present situations. God was with them before in sufferings and gave them grace to bear. He will, for Christ's sake, also be with them in any suffering that lies before them. If they will be bold they will attain finally to the reward. It is surely a sad thing to miss the promise for lack of steadfastness, after having started out on the way with God.

In every circumstance and situation of life we have the promise: **"For yet a little while he that cometh shall come and shall not tarry."** This promise will have its complete fulfillment in the coming again in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, God's righteous one shall live by his faith. That is, his faith shall be an experimental walk in the fellowship with God and in the appropriating of the unseen powers at our disposal for Christ's sake. So we will not shrink back, realizing that shrinking back leads to perdition, but we will continue to live by faith unto the final glorious saving of our soul in all eternity.

Suggestions for Study—Ch. 11

1. Study carefully what is meant by faith in this chapter.

2. What four words in vv. 1–3 set forth what faith obtains and experiences?

3. Study the following groupings of the examples of faith:

1) Examples of those who by faith accepted from God, Ch. 11. 4–16. List the examples and what each accepted.

2) Examples of those who by faith acted upon the reality of the future, Ch. 11. 17–31. List the examples and what they did.

3) Examples of those who by faith accomplished great things, Ch. 11. 32–38. Observe the contrast in what they were able to do.

4. How does the comparison in vv. 39–40 relate all these examples to the theme of the book.

5. Be sure to look up in the Old Testament all the characters and incidents with which you are not familiar.

VI

FAITH

We have now come to the fifth and last division of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In this division it is the author's purpose to show how practical it may be in daily life to have such a High Priest as our Lord Jesus Christ. Since we have such a High Priest; since He has accomplished so perfectly our salvation for us; since we may through Him draw near to the throne of grace "to receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need," we ought to live

E. A Better Life of
- **a) Faith, Ch. 11.**
- **b) Hope, Ch. 12.**
- **c) Love, Ch. 13.**

In our very first study in Hebrews we pointed out how the author brings in the subjects of faith, hope and love in Ch. 10. 22, 23, 24. The first verse in each of chapters 11, 12, and 13 indicates clearly that he means to develop these three themes in the practical Christian life.

At the close of Ch. 10 he has especially dwelt on the idea of faith continued unto the final saving or glorification of the soul. It is very interesting to note his use of the quotation from Habakkuk, in which we find the statement: **"My righteous one shall live by faith."** Paul uses this same quotation in Rom. 1. 17. It would seem that in reading it there, one should put the emphasis on the word "righteous"; "The **righteous** shall live by faith." This corresponds to the theme of Romans, which sets forth that there is no possible way of being righteous before God except by faith in Jesus Christ.

We find the same quotation in Gal. 3. 11. Here it would seem that we should read it: "The righteous shall live by **faith.**" In Galatians Paul sets forth that righteousness is by faith and can never be by works.

Here in Hebrews it would seem that we should read it: "My righteous one shall **live** by faith," for it is the purpose of the author to show us that, not only may we come to God through Jesus Christ to receive mercy, but, having come to God and knowing what a Saviour Christ Jesus is, we also experience the grace that we need for every circumstance and situation of life. Our faith in Christ should so lay hold of Him as to enable us to live out the Christ life while we are here in this world. This life is lived out in faith, hope and love.

a) The Better Life of Faith.

1. **Faith defined, Ch. 11. 1–3.**
2. **Faith that receives from God, Ch. 11. 4–16.**
3. **Faith that acts on the reality of the future, Ch. 11. 17–31.**
4. **Faith accomplishing great things, Ch. 11. 32–40.**

1. Faith defined, Ch. 11. 1–3.

11. 1 Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. 2 For therein the elders had witness

> borne to them. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.

It is evident that here we do not have a definition of the faith in which a sinner comes to God and accepts salvation in Jesus Christ, but a definition of the faith which, from that starting point, goes on and lives out the life received in Christ.

There are four words around which the meanings of the definition can be grouped:

1) **Assurance. "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for."** In the Revised Version the marginal translation is very helpful in understanding this. According to it we may read: **"Now faith is the giving substance to what is hoped for."** The meaning would then be that in Christ Jesus we have been given the right to hope for great blessings. We have been given a new spiritual organ, namely that of faith. Faith exercises itself in giving substance to what we hoped for. The things hoped for become real to faith. Just as our physical senses can make material things real to us, so this spiritual sense, or organ, can make the spiritual or hoped for things real to us. When faith is thus exercised it is also true that the things God has given us occasion to hope for are just as real as material things are.

2) **Conviction. "Now faith is . . . a conviction of things not seen."** Here too, the marginal translation is very helpful, by which we would read: **"Now faith is . . . a test of things not seen."** That is, not only do the hoped for things become real to us when we exercise the organ of faith, but having become assured of their

reality we are actually willing to put them to the experimental test. By faith we are willing to act as though the things hoped for were real. We are not only willing to so act, but we dare to act as though they were real and have no doubt as to the outcome.

3) **Witness.** The elders are mentioned as an example of those who found faith to be a spiritual organ by which they were able to enter into intimate fellowship with God. Because they exercised this organ of faith God was able to bear witness to them and let them know of His presence, His power, and His pleasure with them. This fellowship between God and the heroes and heroines of faith he intends to develop fully in the chapter.

4) **Understand.** In exercising the spiritual sense of faith we come to the understanding of two things which are absolutely necessary for living a life by faith. First, that the worlds have been framed by the Word of God. The word for "worlds" here is the one that means the "ages" or "dispensations." When we understand that God has Himself framed the dispensations by His Word, then we realize that they must finally work out according to God's plan and purpose. We may be absolutely certain that God's prophetic word concerning the consummation of all the ages must absolutely be carried out. History is not an interpretation of prophecy, but prophecy is a course or a bed in which it is absolutely certain that history will flow. All future history has already been framed by the Word of God. Therefore when we read God's Word, faith understands this and knows that God's purpose must be carried out.

The second thing that faith understands is **"that what is seen hath not been made out of things**

which appear.” Faith realizes that in the working out of God’s purposes there are many things which are invisible. Faith knows that back of the visible scenes there are invisible powers at work and faith relies upon the power of the invisible God and His invisible servants to carry out His purposes.

Now follows a marvelous list of examples of how faith, as thus defined, works out in practical life.

2. Faith accepts from God, Ch. 11. 4–16.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh. 5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God: 6 and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised: 12 wherefore also there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea-shore, innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. 15 And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

Abel

By faith Abel obtained the knowledge that a sacrifice, to be pleasing to God, must be a blood sacrifice.

When he brought the blood sacrifice in faith God caused him to know that he was righteous in that he was looking forward to a blood sacrifice that would really pay for his sins.

As a result, although he is dead, he is still speaking of the necessity of a blood sacrifice for sin and thus has had the privilege of being a preacher of the blood sacrifice down through the ages.

Enoch

Enoch was so assured of the reality of the unseen world that he was enabled by faith to obtain the experience of being translated without seeing death.

In order to thus enter into the presence of God it was necessary that he be well pleasing unto God. Because he had faith in God it was possible for God to give him the testimony that he was well pleasing unto God. Evidently Enoch, too, had believed the promise of God concerning a Saviour and was looking forward to Him whose blood would take away all the guilt of sin. Because he had this assurance of being well pleasing unto God he dared in faith also to obtain the marvelous experience of the translation.

The example of Enoch gives occasion for the general statement "**without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto God,**" and we see two of the elementary factors of faith, namely that of coming to a God whose existence we trust and seeking for a God whom we look to as a rewarder.

Noah

Because he had faith, Noah could receive warning of God concerning things not seen as yet. Because he had faith he was different from the rest of his generation and could be "**moved with godly fear.**" Because he had faith he dared to be foolish in the sight of the world and "**prepared an ark to the saving of his house.**"

Thus in his work two things were accomplished. "**He condemned the world**"; "**He became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**"

Abraham

Because he was a man of faith Abraham was enabled to hear God when He called. God's promise of an inheritance became real to him. In his faith he was enabled to obey God's call and he not only in his will yielded to God, but he actually went out, even though he did not know whither he was going. Because his faith made him absolutely sure of the inheritance he did not throw up his hands and quit when he did not enter into the possession of the promise, but was able to be satisfied to be a sojourner in the land of promise as in a land not his own, although God had given it to him and by faith he knew he would possess it.

This faith of his was projected through Isaac and Jacob, who were "**heirs with him of the same promise.**" The fact that he dwelt in a tent as a sojourner was not a disappointment to him because he was looking for a different kind of a city than those which men build. "**For he looked for a city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**"

Sarah

When Sarah "**counted him faithful who had promised,**" then her faith became a spiritual organ by which she even was enabled to receive "**power to conceive seed when she was past age.**" Thus both Abraham and Sarah obtained the fulfillment of the promise, not only of one child, but of an innumerable seed; spiritual seed as suggested by the stars of heaven, as well as a physical seed as suggested by the sand that is by the seashore.

These All Died

Yes, they all died, but they died in faith, so that, even though they had not received the promises, they were not losers. They had seen the promises and faith had made the promises so real to them that they had "**greeted them from afar.**" They were not privileged to live until they entered into the complete fulfillment of the promises, but they knew that that fulfillment was on the way. Therefore they had the courage to confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. They had no thought whatsoever of returning to an earthbound existence.

So by faith they all obtained two glorious things. They knew of a heavenly country with a city that God had prepared for them, to which they were going. And in this knowledge they were enabled to die victoriously. Also, they had obtained the assurance that God was not ashamed to be called their God.

This is the second time that this idea of God not being ashamed to know His children appears in the Letter. Look it up again in chapter two. What a marvelous thought it is! God would surely have many an occasion to be ashamed of us. But when any, through Christ Jesus, set out on a pilgrimage to the heavenly land and city, then God is not ashamed to call Himself their God, even though they may fail and stumble many times as they go on their way. This also includes the thought that God is not ashamed to work on their behalf to bring them gloriously to their destination.

In all the above examples the emphasis seems to have been on the idea of faith receiving something from God, although there has appeared also the idea of faith's experimenting on the reality of the unseen. That thought, however, is now brought out even more strikingly.

3. Faith acting upon the reality of the future, Ch. 11. 17–31.

17 By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped,

leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the first-born should not touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace.

Abraham

The author again speaks of Abraham, now using him as an example of one who had faith in the reality of the future and dared to act on that faith. So we see that although Isaac was the one in whom was bound up the fulfillment of all God's promises, yet Abraham was willing to offer him up as a sacrifice because he was absolutely certain that God was "**able to raise him up, even from the dead.**" That is, Abraham believed in the absolute reality of a resurrection and believed that even though Isaac should have to die, God could raise him from the dead and in him still fulfill all His promises. He had so truly sacrificed Isaac in his mind and heart that when God stopped the sacrifice, he "in a figure" received him back from the dead.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

When these three men were about to depart from this life, they all spoke of and made arrangements concerning the future things, showing thereby that they were absolutely certain that God's promises would have a fulfillment.

Parents of Moses

This godly couple was enabled by faith to see the future of the goodly child which God had given them. Because of that vision they dared to disregard the king's commandment.

Moses

Moses saw three things that he dared to act upon. He saw first, that the reproach of Christ was greater than the treasures of Egypt. In Christ there would be a heavenly reward and for the sake of that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He refused to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season and he chose to share ill treatment with the people of God.

In the second place, he was enabled by faith to see Him who is invisible. This vision of God enabled him to forsake Egypt and not fear the wrath of the king.

In the third place he saw the salvation that there is in the blood of Christ, and, acting upon the reality of it, **"kept the passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them."** And so, not only himself, but the Israelites were saved from that plague of death.

Israel

Moses' faith is seen projected through the people of Israel, who by him are led to faith. They dared to pass through the Red Sea although, except for the restraining power of God, the waters could rush upon them and destroy them as they did destroy the Egyptians.

In faith they dared to do at the city of Jericho that which would certainly seem foolish to the natural man, but, because they acted in faith, they conquered the city.

And here in Jericho we see that even a Gentile woman, Rahab, could receive the same gift of faith. Believing that God would do what He had promised Israel, she acted upon her faith and escaped destruction.

4. Faith accomplishing great things, Ch. 11. 32–40.

> 32 And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. 35 Women received their dead by a resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. 39 And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, 40 God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

What a challenging series of triumphs of faith is here detailed! If you will look closely you will see that they cover every kind of difficult experience that you might think of. They show that nothing is impossible to him that believeth. As you meditate upon these exploits of faith, think of the words of Jesus: "According to your faith be it unto you."

But we are to observe that faith not only has accomplished great exploits; it has also given power to endure great sufferings. Note the tremendous contrast that appears in the middle of v. 35: **"and others were tortured, etc."** Who shall say which is the greater faith, the faith that is able to produce a miracle, or the faith that is able to refuse a miracle; **"not accepting their deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection?"**

But all of these had the same experience of "having had witness borne to them through their faith." God was in contact with them and revealed to them His presence, His power and His pleasure.

However, they "received not the promise." In not letting them receive the promise, God "provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." We are now in a much more advantageous situation than they were, for we have received the fulfillment of such marvelous promises in our Lord Jesus Christ. In view of our having Christ as our High Priest, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, we surely ought also to be able to exercise faith even as all those who have been mentioned in this chapter.

How real is your fellowship with God?

How sure are you that God's promises must be fulfilled?

Does your life demonstrate that you are actually living as though God and heaven were real? As though our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again in glory, and we are going to be in heaven with Him?

These ought to be challenging questions to many a child of God.

Suggestions for Study—Ch. 12

1. Make a list of all the elements of hope or patience.
2. Make a list of all the encouragements.
3. Make a list of all the exhortations.
4. Make a list of all the warnings.
5. Review the warning sections in the Letter. Try to see how they are all tied up and concluded in Ch. 12. 25–29.
6. Make a list of the comparisons between Sinai and Zion in Ch. 12. 18–24.

VII

HOPE

b) The Better Life of Hope, Ch. 12.

Our great High Priest not only provided a way of salvation by which we may have the privilege of drawing nigh unto God in intimate and personal fellowship with Him, but He continues to minister to all those who have drawn nigh and to provide them with grace to meet every situation in a life of faith here on earth.

In our study of Ch. 11 we have seen how such a life of faith is experimental and how it has been lived by those who had not received the promises but who yet trusted them and lived upon the reality of them. We who have received the promises ought therefore to be the more able to live a life which counts upon the reality of God and the unseen powers. Such an attitude of life is the only consistent one. Our whole conduct in daily life is to be a revelation of the fact that we are living in fellowship with the holy God.

The author knows of the danger of being drawn away from this fellowship with God, especially through fear of the attitudes of fellowmen toward us when we confess Christ. His appeal in Ch. 12 is therefore to steadfastness. And it is especially **the hope** of finally attaining to a fellowship with God in glory which will keep us steadfast in our faith. So, as faith is the spiritual organ by which God and the unseen become real to us, hope is also a spiritual organ by which we are challenged and encouraged and strengthened to steadfast living by faith.

The chapter begins with a picture of the Christian life as a race and that idea can be seen running through the chapter. Thus we have four divisions:

1. **The race, vv. 1–3.**
2. **The training, vv. 4–17.**
3. **The goal, vv. 18–24.**
4. **The speaker, vv. 25–29.**

The first division presents a **challenge**; the second offers **consolation**; the third gives us **encouragement**; and the fourth utters **warning.**

The picture of the race is given in vv. 1–3. We can see two elements in the picture: first, encouragements; and second, hindrances.

> 12. 1 Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls.

1) Encouragements.

"A cloud of witnesses." When the author speaks of so great a cloud of witnesses, he must refer to those who have been set forth in Ch. 11. All those mentioned in that chapter, both individually and in great groups, are witnesses of the possibility of steadfastly living a life of faith, even until death comes. Since they all testify to us that it is a blessed and courageous thing to walk by faith, we ought to heed their challenge and continue in our life of faith in spite of difficulties that might come to us as we run the race.

It has been tempting to many to build on this passage a faith that the departed dead now encompass us, and watch us as we run the race. And their presence in the unseen world ought to be a challenge to us to run the race with steadfastness. It is significant, however, that there is a Greek word for "eye-witness" which the author might have used but did not, whereas he chose to use a word which means that they "bear testimony." It would therefore seem to be safest to assume that he is referring to the testimony that is brought in Ch. 11 of the possibility of steadfastly living a life of faith.

The second great encouragement is that of

"Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." It is interesting to notice that whenever the author speaks of our Lord by the name Jesus, he especially refers to His human experiences. Now as we run the race we may look unto Jesus as one who already has Himself run the race to a victorious conclusion.

He is called the author and perfecter of faith; or "captain," in the sense of being the first human who has run the race to a glorious conclusion, and "perfecter" in the sense of never having failed in the walk of faith.

The joy that was set before Him was not only the joy of Himself reaching the right hand of the throne of God, but also as has already been set forth in Ch. 2, the joy of **"bringing many sons unto glory."** In order that He might obtain that joy, He **"endured the cross, despising shame."** But now He **"hath sat down at**

the right hand of the throne of God.'' There is one man who has attained to God's great destiny for man.

Since He is seated on the right hand of the throne of God and is one with God Himself, He is also marvelously able to help those who are running the race if they look to Him for help. We are then not to turn our eyes to the things about us, the obstacles and the enemies; nor gaze at our own feet, which will only cause us to stumble; but trustingly look to Jesus. Practically, this means to study the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures, to let the mind be occupied with thoughts of Him and to fellowship with Him in prayer. It is possible for a Christian to "practice the presence" of the living Christ in every experience of life. To do so means victory over sin and a life of useful service for God in whatever sphere we may be found.

2) Hindrances.

If we are to give ourselves to the running of the race of the Christian life with steadfastness, it is necessary that we adopt a certain attitude towards the things that would hinder us in the race. Let us also **"lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."** The author would seem to divide the hindrances into "weights" and "sins."

Weights. There are many things in the life here on earth which in themselves may not be sins, but as far as their relation to our throwing ourselves into the Christian life is concerned, they are weights, and like Paul, who was willing to count all things to be loss in order that he might throw himself into the race, so should we be willing to cast aside these weights.

The company we keep; the books we read; the pleasures we take part in; even our personal habits in the matter of eating, smoking, sleeping, etc., may all become weights and therefore should be prayerfully examined in their relation to our living the Christian life. Whenever we find that there is the least question about it and we are puzzled as to whether a certain thing or line of action is right or wrong, all we need to do is to ask ourselves whether or not we are being hindered in the abandoning of ourselves to the running of the race.

Running and winning the race must stand absolutely first. Everything else must be secondary and we must be ready to drop it as soon as it becomes a weight. An athlete who has really set his mind upon being crowned the victor in a contest, will not let any personal pleasure or possession stand in his way. Everything must be cast aside as he throws himself with abandon into the race. This should be the Christian's attitude.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." Sin is here thought of in the figure of a garment clinging to us and hindering us in our race. Some have thought that it particularly refers to the sin of unbelief as the sin which in a very special sense easily besets us. Whether it refers to that sin or every sin, it is surely true that our human nature is such that sin clings to us like a garment, and living the Christian life involves a willingness to be completely separated from our sins. This we have in ourselves no power to do and we are therefore the more driven to look to Jesus, who, as we have already learned, is **"able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."**

This power of His to save to the uttermost includes also the power to separate us from our besetting sins. The question, then, is not one of possibility, but of our willingness to be separated so that we actually hand ourselves over to Jesus Christ to let Him perform this spiritual operation.

Finally, the race is to be **run with patience,** or steadfastness. We are not to run in little spurts as a result of certain experiences in our life, or because of the encouragement that comes with certain seasons of the year, such as Christmas and Easter. We are not to run like one who makes a short dash, only to fall panting by the roadside.

We are to run like the marathon runner. We are to keep it up, keep it up, keep it up. We are to go on and on day after day. When everybody and everything seems to say, "You might as well quit;" when we are spiritually weary to the point of agony; we are to look to Jesus Christ and say, "Lord, I am going to keep on anyway, in spite of the world and the flesh and the devil and all his hordes, and Thou must give me grace and power."

If, because of the weakness of the flesh we stumble and fall, we are not to lie there bemoaning our sin. We must look to Jesus, confess our sin, accept His forgiveness and go on again with our face forward and not looking back to the point of failure, which will only cause us to fall and stumble again.

"Run with patience the race that is set before us." Run steadfastly, run doggedly, run persistently, run onward. When by your own strength you cannot run another step, run anyway, by the strength that will come to you from Him who has attained the goal of the right hand of the throne of God.

We must expect to meet obstacles in the race. Even Jesus met them. **"For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls."** If the Lord Jesus met all kinds of opposition from sinners when He sought to live a life of fellowship with His heavenly Father amongst men, certainly we should not wax weary, fainting in our souls when we have the same experiences. No matter what you may have to suffer in your battle against sin, **"ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."**

Since he has pointed us to Jesus as the example, this must refer to His striving against sin. And then we have no doubt here again a reference to Gethsemane where He did resist, even unto blood.

The fact that there are hardships and difficulties in the way of living the Christian life has its benefits. Such experiences are to be looked upon as

2. The Training. Ch. 12. 4–17

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin:
5 and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons,
My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,
Nor faint when thou art reproved of him;
6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
7 It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit,

that we may be partakers of his holiness. 11 All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; 13 and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

14 Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. 17 For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Reasons for discipline.

1) **"God dealeth with you as with sons."** Here the author reminds his readers of what God has said in Prov. 3. 11 concerning chastening. To be chastened of the Lord is no sign of having been forsaken "**for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.**" In fact, chastening is so very much an essential part of the Christian experience that if we are without chastening we may well be very much concerned for "**then are ye bastards and not sons.**"

Even in the earthly relationship of father and son there was such a thing as chastening and "**we gave them reverence.**" "**Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?**"

Therefore, when we run the race of the Christian life and difficulties come into our lives, the attitude to take is not that of complaint, but of surrender to the Father, who permits such things to enter into our lives.

2) "That we may be partakers of his holiness." God's purpose in chastening us is absolutely faultless. Our earthly fathers chastened us as seemed good to them and they may oftentimes have been mistaken in what seemed good. But the heavenly Father can never be mistaken. If we yield ourselves to Him, then the chastening that He brings into our lives will absolutely be used of Him to cause us to be partakers of His holiness.

3) "It yieldeth peaceable fruit." If we take the proper attitude towards chastening we shall experience the fruit of righteousness in our lives. We shall have more grace to say "No" to the evil and we shall become more Christ-like in our character. This is something that we should very much desire, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of others who observe us, **"that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed."**

4) Personal attitude towards chastening. Chastening will yield its fruit **"unto them that have been exercised thereby."** What it means to be exercised by the chastening would seem to be indicated by such thoughts as: we should not forget the exhortation, v. 5; regard not lightly, v. 5; nor faint, v. 6; we are to endure, v. 7; we are to be in subjection, v. 9. Such an attitude towards chastening will produce a definite attitude towards self, towards others and towards God.

Our attitude towards self. "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees: and make straight paths for your feet." The Christian life is not to be lived in the attitude of one who has given up because of difficulties involved. To become depressed and downhearted will certainly make our walk a wavering one, whereas if we look to Jesus and submit to the Father, then our walk will be a straightforward one.

Our attitude towards others. We will realize that our Christian life is an example to others which will either hinder or help them. And not only should our life be an example which others may see, but we should actively **"follow after peace with all men."** This following after, or pursuing peace with all men, is something that only those who have experienced chastening can really do because it involves the denying of the self-life and the self-interests and giving them up for the sake of others.

Our attitude towards God. We should not only pursue peace with all men, but especially **"the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord."** This would indicate that even though it is a work of the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to produce holiness in our lives, we on our part must earnestly desire it and be willing to give ourselves to the pursuit of it ,and it involves **"looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled."**

The grace of God is not received for careless usage. We are not to think that we can deliberately live in sin and in the grace of God at the same time. We are to be willing that the grace of God shall search out the deepest roots of our life, realizing that our organic relationship to our fellowmen is such that sin in us may also be the cause of defiling many others.

Two such deep-rooted sins are mentioned. **"Lest there be any fornicator,"** referring to sexual impurities; or **"profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright."**

The word "profane" here does not mean the use of blasphemous speech, but means a thoroughly secular man, a man in whose life there is no holy place or "fane" which is set apart for God, but to whom everything is so common that he is willing to sell his spiritual birthright even if it be only **"for one mess of meat."**

The awful danger of becoming such a secular person, so worldly-minded that there is no special place in the life for God, is that the opportunity of again coming to God may be lost. Many a man has despised spiritual fellowship with God and then afterwards awakened to the realization of the awful emptiness of such a life, but when they have desired to come back to God, they have found, like Esau, that the opportunity had passed, not that God would not be willing to receive them, but that in their own nature there has been sustained the loss of the possibility of appropriating God's gifts of grace. God is indeed willing to receive any sinner who repents and returns to Him, but there are many blessings which cannot be obtained by those who for a long time shut God out of their lives.

3. The Goal. Ch. 12. 18–24

18 For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word

> more should be spoken unto them; 20 for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; 21 and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: 22 but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

In setting forth the goal which is to be our great encouragement in running the race, the author again takes up the method of contrasting the new with the old. In this instance he tells us that we are not coming to mount Sinai but to mount Zion.

Mount Sinai was of terrifying aspect. It was a material mountain. It suggested distance and separation from God.

In contrast we see the glories of

Mount Zion.

1) The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, not an earthly, material mountain.

2) Innumerable hosts of angels.

3) The general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven. This would seem to refer to all who have come to Christ since the birth of the church.

4) God, the Judge of all. And yet we may come to Him and not be afraid.

5) The spirits of just men made perfect, which would seem to refer to all those under the old covenant who found salvation by faith in the promise of the Saviour.

6) Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.

7) The blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel, and because of which sinners may be permitted to enter into such glorious fellowship. It is because we have the hope of consummating that fellowship in a glory that is to come that we may have the strength and endurance to continue steadfastly running the race.

4. The Speaker. Ch. 12. 25–29

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven: 26 whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." This is the fifth great warning of the Epistle and comes back again to the ground of the first warning. God hath spoken to us through Jesus Christ. The fact that we have heard God speak through Christ does not lessen but greatly increases our responsibilities. When God spake at Mount Sinai, He warned them on earth, and if there was no escape for them when they refused to listen to His warnings, **"much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven."** The comparison is continued. At Mount Sinai God's voice shook the earth, but in the new covenant **"he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make**

to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven.'' We are here told that God is going to permit the shaking of many **''things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.''**

We are certainly living in an age when many things are being shaken, but in the midst of the shaking of all these things which we often may have thought of as being stable, there yet are some things which are absolutely unshakeable, and they are such as have been set forth in this Epistle.

Griffith Thomas in his book, "Let Us Go On," suggests the following seven "unshakeable realities that abide essentially the same under all circumstances."

1. The fact of God's being and character, Ch. 1.
2. The revelation of God in the Person of Christ, Ch. 1, 2.
3. The reality of Christ's personal experiences during His earthly life, Ch. 4, 5.
4. The redemptive elements in Christ's work, Ch. 5–7.
5. The provision of spiritual blessing in Christ, Ch. 7–10.
6. The possibility in human life of "all things that pertain to life and godliness" being realized and enjoyed through faith, Ch. 11.
7. The certainty of the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the revelation of the Lord from heaven to usher in and establish His kingdom, Ch. 12.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. When He comes many things, both in the visible universe and in the world of mankind which we consider real and essential will disappear like scaffolding which has served its purpose, while from within will appear the real and the true kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. **"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."**

If we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again to establish the kingdom of God in glory, then our lives will be spent in the service of God, not in an attitude of carelessness and frivolity, but in an attitude of reverence and awe towards God, who is in His holiness a consuming fire. It is in this attitude towards God that we will live the life of love, which is set forth in Ch. 13.

Suggestions for Study—Ch. 13

1. Make a list of those who are to be the object of our love.

2. To what acts will love impel us?

3. What is to be our attitude towards true and false teachers?

4. Where are we to suffer and why? What does this suffering mean?

5. What sacrifices are we to bring?

6. In vv. 20–21 list what God has done and what He is requested to do?

VIII

LOVE

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (10. 24).

By this statement in Ch. 10 the author indicated that he intended to show that our fellowship with God in Christ Jesus would not only be revealed in a life of faith (Ch. 11); and steadfastness of hope (Ch. 12); but also in a life of love. This he now sets forth in many practical aspects in Ch. 13.

c) The Better Life of Love.

1. **Love of the brethren, vv. 1–6.**
2. **Love of teachers, vv. 7–17.**
3. **Closing words, vv. 18–25.**

1. Love of the brethren. Ch. 13. 1–6.

13. 1 Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body. 4 Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5 Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. 6 So that with good courage we say,

The Lord is my helper; I will not fear:
What shall man do unto me?

"Let love of the brethren continue." The language suggests that Christ Jesus is the source of that love and we are to permit it to continue in its onward course of blessing through us. This love of the brethren reminds us of the new commandment that our Lord Jesus Christ gave that those who are saved in Christ shall love one another. Before Christ died and gave the grace for this new commandment men knew about love of God and also love of man, the latter to be expressed in deeds of kindness and mercy, but that men should love one another because they have become members in the body of Christ, was something that had not been known on earth before. We know, too, that the early Christians were noted amongst the heathen for the love that they showed one another.

There can be no doubt that this is an admonition which Christians need to heed in our own day. There is a great stream of love issuing from Jesus Christ, but too often it is not permitted to flow out through the members of His body in love one for another. Love would solve all the problems of our relationship with each other as fellow Christians. When the heart is filled with the love of Christ towards fellow-believers, then every vice and evil desire is crowded out. In this connection it would be profitable to again read 1 Cor. 13.

a. Strangers.

In the early days of Christianity, because of the many persecutions, many Christians became wanderers over the face of the earth and were therefore in need of hospitality, which was also enjoined by the apostles. It is interesting to note how the author suggests that the entertainment of strangers might bring about an intriguing and blessed experience, **"for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."**

The reference here to Abraham is, of course, evident. However, the author of Hebrews believes that there are angels now too, and as he has already said, **"they are sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation"** (1. 14). Even though God might not cause an angel to appear in human form as a stranger to be entertained, there can be no doubt but that the angels ministered to many Christians who were driven hither and thither in the persecutions, and receiving one of these pilgrims would also be receiving the angel that had been sent of God to minister to him. And there still are children of God in the world who are strangers and who are certainly in need of the kindly hospitality of Christians who are better situated.

b. Prisoners.

Many Christians were in prison or in bonds because of their faith in Christ and as Christians the readers should feel so really a part of the same body that they would **"remember them . . . as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves in the body."** Those of us who are Christians and live under the great blessing of a land in which we are not persecuted for our faith, are surely tempted to forget the brethren who suffer, as in Russia and China today. It would indeed be well to remember that we are also in the body and that we may be called upon to experience such sufferings too, for most assuredly these are days that are evil.

c. Marriage.

True Christian love will also be a solution for marriage problems. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, as over against any teachings of forced asceticism. On the other hand, there is to be purity in the marriage relationship "**for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**" How many who discuss the so-called marriage problems today recognize the fact that God will judge the sinners in this respect? The solutions suggested are oftentimes simply brazen fornication and adultery. God will surely judge both those who so teach and practise.

The only solution is true Christian love. If the love of Christ fills the hearts there will be no troubles between husband and wife that cannot be solved in a blessed way. Neither will anyone else who has the love of Christ in their heart cause any difficulties between a married couple. Christian love is a marvelous power. Where reason and law and every other effort fails to produce the proper relationship between people, Christian love can find wonderful solutions.

d. Money.

Whereas we have been admonished to love the brethren, we are here admonished "**to be free from the love of money.**" Love of the brethren will crowd out love of money, but love of money will never express itself in love of the brethren. Love of money is absolutely self-centered and is "the root of all evil"; for it will cause a person to commit every conceivable sin against the neighbor in order to obtain the object of the love.

Nor are we in any need of loving money, but ought to be "**content with such things as ye have,**" for we have God's own promise to rely upon: **"for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee."** How interesting and challenging to note that because God has said that, then we may **"with good courage say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?"** A Christian who seeks God's kingdom and His righteousness first, can be absolutely sure that God will care for His material needs. Should he have to suffer want, then that is in the Father's plan and purpose for him and will work out for his good.

The next section may be considered under the general head of

2. Love to Teachers. Ch. 13. 7–17

7 Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever. 9 Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited. 10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. 11 For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13 Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come. 15 Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may

do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.

Observe in this section such admonitions as "remember," "imitate," "obey," and "pray for."

a. Past teachers.

When he speaks of their past teachers as such as **''had the rule over you,'' he means that they** were ruled by the authority of the Word of God, which is indicated by the statement: **''men that spake unto you the word of God.''**

It is well to look back to the beginnings, for there is always danger of divergence from the fundamental truths. This is an absolute necessity in the day in which we now live. There are so many different notions as to what Christianity is that the only way to know is to go back to the beginnings and to remember those whom God used to record the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Bible. True Christianity can only be that which is found in the Word of God.

But the readers were not only to remember their former teachers, but also to **''consider the issue of their life.''** And since their life is the fruit of their faith, he admonishes them to imitate their faith.

Truly this is a wonderful thing to be said about a preacher of the Word of God. And this passage ought to be a great challenge to every such preacher. I ought to ask myself, not only if I preach the Word of God in truth and purity, but also if my life is such a fruit-bearing one that it is a demonstration of the faith that is in me to the extent that those who hear me should imitate, not my life, but my faith, in order that fruits of faith might also appear in their lives.

What a challenge to men who today are standing in Christian pulpits and preaching unbelief instead of faith! The great men of God in the past were great because Jesus Christ was the object of their faith. Their Christianity did not consist in trying to be like Jesus, or to teach like Jesus, but it consisted in trusting in Jesus Christ as their Saviour God, drawing near unto God through Him, and when they thus trusted Him, there were glorious results in their lives.

And now the author tells us that "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever.**" Therefore in every generation there can be the same issues of life in those who make Him the object of their faith. He is just as mighty today as He ever was, and just as ready and willing to demonstrate His power in the lives of those who trust Him and proclaim Him. It is absolutely unnecessary to hunt around for new doctrines and new truths, for we have already received the revelation of eternal truth in Jesus Christ, and the great challenge to those who want to be something for God and in the service of man today is that they so surrender themselves to Jesus Christ that He may produce fruits in their lives which shall make them mighty men of God for their generation.

And as we remember that "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever,**" we will have the right attitude towards

b. False Teachers.

Verses 9–16 present many difficulties. The author is evidently pointing out that the false teachers are seeking to lead them to a religion which would consist of outward forms and ceremonies. Therefore "**it is good that the**

heart be established by grace, not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited.'' Then, once again, from the background of the old Jewish services he brings forth how Christ is the fulfillment of it all and that in Him we are to have the grace to bring spiritual sacrifices which will be the fruit of our faith in Him.

When in v. 10 he says, ''**we have an altar,**'' it has the same meaning as the "we have" in v. 14. Therefore he does not mean to speak of any Christian altar, but it is as though he said, "There is a Jewish altar 'whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.'" The reason why the priest could not eat from the altar was that either the bodies were burned on the altar, or, as in the case of the sin-offering which the author mentions particularly, the bodies ''**are burned without the camp.**'' And this, he indicates, was typical. It had its real fulfillment when ''**Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate.**'' "Without the gate," does not only mean that is was outside the city of Jerusalem that our Lord Jesus was crucified, but it particularly means that it was outside of the good will and fellowship of His people. In fact, He had been excommunicated, and it was as a blasphemer and a criminal that He was led away to crucifixion. Therefore, we are not to be influenced by the power and position that false teachers might have and the pressure that they can bring to bear upon us, but be willing to accept the separation that will be ours by a faithful confession of Jesus Christ.

''Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.'' For the readers this meant going forth out of Judaism and being willing to accept the reproach that would be theirs for trusting in the despised and crucified Jesus Christ. This has its application in our day too. In order to be a consistent confessor and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, it ever becomes necessary to be willing to go outside of the camp of those who are worldly and wise in their own conceits. Today there are intellectual circles in which you are considered to be bound in the chains of superstition if you are trusting in the blood-bought redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ and worshipping the God who has revealed Himself in the living and the written Word. Many a young student today needs to hear and heed this admonition to be willing to bear His reproach.

To be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ will absolutely mean separation from every other kind of religious philosophy. As has been so plainly revealed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is absolutely no other approach to God according to the revelation of Christ, than the approach through our great High Priest. Therefore, one who accepts this approach to God cannot, in so-called broadmindedness and tolerance, admit that there is any other approach, nor can he take part in any religious activities or services which purpose to approach God in other ways than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For to make such an admission is to deny the revelation of God in Christ.

And the result of taking such a stand will always be that we must bear the reproach of Christ. As Christians we should be glad to be outside of the camp of so-called Modernism or Liberalism. We should be glad to be outside of the camp of Lodgism or any other kind of religious movement which leaves room for other approaches to God than by the way of the High Priest, who shed His blood for our sins.

And if this cause us any difficulties in this world and in this life, we are not thereby brought to despair, "**for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come.**" And so we do not follow the false teachers, whether they try to get us to bring sacrifices of meats or sacrifices of human intellect. But through the power of the indwelling Christ we are "**to offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**"

Here we see that Christ dwelling in us will cause us to give praise to God, to make confession to His name in the world, and to share material blessings with those who are in need. In such practical expressions will faith give answer to those who would carry us away by diverse strange teachings.

c. Present teachers.

How gloriously the author describes a **true** teacher of the Word! "**For they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account.**" Therefore, when they teach in the authority of the Word of God, in the truth that is in Christ, they are to be obeyed "**that they may give their account with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.**"

Just think if pastors always remembered that they have to give account to God for the souls that have been put under their care! Surely they would be earnest and zealous in seeking those souls for Christ. But let also those who are under the care of a faithful pastor remember that if they cause him grief by their disobedience to the Word of God, it will certainly not be to their profit. God will be the judge.

3. Closing Words. Ch. 13. 18–25

18 Pray for us: for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honorably in all things. 19 And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, 21 make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation: for I have written unto you in few words. 23 Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

In addition to the request to be prayed for, the appeal to receive his exhortation, the reference to Timothy and the salutation from the saints, we also have here the wonderful statement in vv. 20–21, which constitutes a summary of the whole remarkable letter.

The God of peace for you
In the death
In the resurrection

In the blood of an eternal covenant
Of the great shepherd of the sheep
Our Lord Jesus

The God of peace in you
Make you perfect in every good thing
To do His will
Working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight
Through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The same God of peace who worked our salvation through Jesus Christ, also works our sanctification through Jesus Christ by dwelling in us and Himself producing that which is pleasing in His sight. Faith in Jesus Christ for us and faith in Jesus Christ in us is the secret of a better life, the Christian life.

"Grace be with you all. Amen."

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